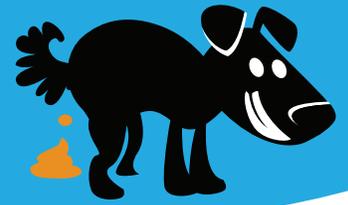


Pet Waste FAQs and Myth Busters



Pollution from pet poop is a problem in our community. Unfortunately, there is some misinformation about it. These FAQs and myth busters can help clear things up.

Poop contains germs and parasites. If left on the ground, it contributes to pollution and creates a risk to animal and human health.

Why do I need to pick up dog poop? Won't dog poop break down naturally?



Dogs are not wildlife, and their waste is not natural. Even though the poop “solids” appear to break down, the germs and parasites stick around! Bacteria can survive in the soil, and when it rains, it travels easily from backyards, parks, and trails to the nearest stream or storm drain. For the same reason, dog poop **cannot** be used as fertilizer and **should not** be thrown into a ditch or ‘out of sight’. It can harm the health of your pet, your kids, and even impact the shellfish you have for dinner.

What to do with the Poo...?

Can I flush pet poop down the toilet?

Maybe. If you are on a municipal sewer system and you can stand the yuck-factor, flushing is an optional method of disposal. For those with septic systems for sewage disposal, flushing pet waste could exceed the design capacity of the septic system. High volumes of hair and ash, not normally found in human waste, can interfere with septic system function and clog drain fields.

Can I bury or compost pet poop?

Nope. Composting and burying may seem practical, but those actions do not kill pathogens in the poop and can still pollute water. The pathogens and parasites in the poop are not properly treated or removed under most compost conditions, and the local commercial composting does not accept it in the yard & food waste bin. Experts strongly advise that pet waste should never be placed in your home compost bin or directly on your landscape.

The best thing you can do is Scoop it, Bag it, and Trash it.

What about other pets?

Yep! Other pets and livestock can cause poo-llution. Small and big dogs, cats, goats, chickens, you name it...If it poops, you scoop! Every little bit adds up, and you'll be protecting your family and your community. Pets and livestock have unique waste management techniques. The Whatcom Conservation District can help with free resources and technical assistance, visit www.whatcomcd.org/small-farm

What about wildlife?

When wildlife populations are concentrated, they can also contribute to bacteria pollution in our communities. Avoid attracting wildlife, such as raccoon, deer, and waterfowl, to your home or parks. Wildlife are often motivated by easy food and shelter. You may think that providing these things is helping them, but it's actually harmful. Keeping wildlife *wild* is part of the solution to improving water quality in your community. Healthy watersheds are able to handle natural levels of animal waste without impacting water quality. Learn more at www.whatcomcounty.us/2916/

At home and on walks.... Scoop it, Bag it, Trash it!



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This didn't seem like an issue when I was growing up... What's different now?

Our population has increased in the last 50 years, and because we love our furry companions, so has the number of dogs. **More dogs pooping in a small area = more pollution.** Pollution from human and animal poop has always been a public health concern. It's all raw sewage and that can spread disease. Over time, we have discovered and developed solutions to keep our communities healthier, like sewage and septic systems, and bagging and trashing pet poop.

~50,000 DOGS
in Whatcom County



= 37,500
pounds of poop every day!

> 300
TRILLION
fecal bacteria



Let's talk about the *bags*.

What's the deal with biodegradable bags?

While some poop bags indicate that they are biodegradable, this doesn't mean they should be tossed on the trail or left in the woods. If left in the open environment, the associated pathogens are still a risk to public health and water quality. Remember, pet poop is raw sewage. If you scoop with these bags, it is important that you **Trash it!**

What's the deal with the bags left on the side of the trail?

The best intentions may be there, but many poop bags are left on the trail and forgotten. It's not always ideal, but hanging on to the bag until you reach a trash can or car is the best option. Trash cans not available on every trail, but it is still your responsibility to pick up after your pet and pack it out. Check out our website for some creative ways to carry your pet's poop more conveniently.

Thank you and kudos to the community members who are going the extra mile and picking up others' poop bag pollution!

I hate using so many plastic bags, any suggestions?

We agree that plastic isn't great for our environment, but it is currently the best and safest option we have for disposing of pet waste. We recommend purchasing dog bags made from recycled plastic or better yet reuse your own plastic produce or newspaper bags.

Another bag saving tip is to wait to knot your bag and use one bag to pick up all of the poops on your walk.

At home, try using a scooper stick and a bag-lined bin to reduce the amount of plastic you use.



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Visit our website www.whatcomcounty.us/scooppoop
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