

Something To Think About Pet Waste

Many people enjoy having pets and caring for them. But have you thought about the impact pets may have on water quality?

In reality, pet waste can be a major polluter. Studies in Seattle; showed pet waste to be the main pollutant in one of its main waterways.

So what problems can occur when pet owners allow pet waste to be washed into storm water? There are two pollutants that come from pet waste that can cause problems for water quality: nutrients and bacteria. Nutrients from pet waste cause a process known as eutrophication. This leads to an increase in weed and algae growth. The weeds and green water can make boating and fishing difficult or undesirable. This greening of the water can block sunlight affecting bottom-rooted plants. When nutrient levels lessen the weeds and algae decompose using oxygen and possibly causing fish to die.

Other sources of nutrient pollution include leaves and grass clippings as well as excess fertilizers.

Bacteria from pet wastes can cause a variety of symptoms from nausea to diarrhea to rash and even death in people with weakened immune systems.

So how can a pet owner take care of waste responsibly? There are a couple of options for pet waste disposal. The first option is to bag the pet waste and throw it away in the garbage. This is a legal way to dispose of pet waste. Another suggestion is to bury the waste. It is suggested that you dig a hole at least one foot deep. You can then place three to four inches of waste in the hole and cover it with at least eight inches of soil. Keep buried waste away from vegetable gardens and water sources. Don't add pet waste to compost. It will not get hot enough to kill pathogens in pet waste. We should remember that the pets don't pollute, people do. Please clean up after your pets.

Sources

EPA "Public Education and Outreach on Storm Water Impacts"

City of Seattle "what's the Problem With Pet Waste?"

<http://www.seattle.gov/>