



Pet Waste and Water Quality

What does dog poo have to do with my bayou?

Pet waste is one of *many* sources of water pollution, and something most of us can easily address as we go about our daily routine.

Rain water washes poop left on the ground into our storm drains, which connect to creeks and bayous where the poo decomposes. During decomposition, this waste uses up precious oxygen needed by fish and other creatures to stay alive and healthy.



One of the problems many bodies of water face in the Houston-Galveston area is low levels of oxygen present in the water. With warm temperatures and high levels of other pollutants (especially nitrogen and phosphorus), the decomposition of poop and other waste can cause a drop in oxygen that is harmful to fish and other aquatic organisms. Many of our bayous also have elevated levels of fecal coliform bacteria, and pet waste is often one source of this pollution.

What can I do about dog poo?



BAG IT

Pick up dog waste using a plastic bag and deposit it into a trash can.

Reuse plastic shopping bags or purchase biodegradable bags at a pet store.



FLUSH IT

Pick up dog waste, deposit it into the toilet and flush it away. Do NOT flush bags!



BURY IT

Pick up dog waste, dig a hole about 6 inches deep, place waste into hole and cover. Be sure to do this well away from gardens growing edible plants!



Health Risks of Pet Waste

Pet waste may contain bacteria, viruses and parasites that are harmful to humans.

Some diseases caused by pet waste include:

Campylobacteriosis – bacterial infection that causes diarrhea in humans (carried by dogs and cats)

Cryptosporidium – parasitic infection that causes diarrhea and abdominal distress (carried by dogs and cats)



Toxocariasis – Common round worms that can infect humans and cause temporary vision loss, rash, fever or cough (carried by dogs)

Toxoplasmosis – parasite especially harmful to pregnant women because it can cause birth defects (carried by cats)

Salmonellosis– bacterial infection that causes nausea, vomiting, painful stomach cramps, diarrhea, headache and fever (carried by dogs and cats)



Pet Waste Ordinances

Many communities have chosen to adopt pet waste ordinances to keep poop out of waterways and off of shoes. These “pooper scooper” laws typically require pet owners to clean up after their pets when they are on public property such as parks. This is especially important for parks located on a bayou and for dog parks. A well worded ordinance should also encourage proper pet waste disposal at home.



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