

Waste from pets can contribute to lake pollution

When you clean up after your pet, do you dump the waste in the storm drain? Do you leave it to decay on the sidewalk, street, or nearby grass?

If so, you may be contributing to pollution problems in local lakes and rivers.

The majority of storm drains in the city of Forest Lake drain directly to a lake, wetland, stream or

river.

This means pet waste discarded in storm drains is carried straight to your neighborhood waterways.

Pet wastes dropped on streets, sidewalks or lawns are washed into storm sewers by rain or melting snow and also end up in local waters.

Once in water, pet wastes decay. The decomposition process reduces oxygen levels in the water and may re-

lease ammonia.

Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures can kill fish.

As pet wastes decay they also release nutrients. Phosphorus is one such nutrient that can harm lakes by producing algae growth.

Excess algae is harmful to fish, makes water bodies less attractive for recreation, and is a sign of poor

water quality.

Not only are pet wastes harmful to aquatic health, they also jeopardize human health.

Common parasitic and bacterial infections associated with animal excrement include salmonellosis, toxoplasmosis and toxocarosis.

When pet wastes are transported to a local lake or stream, these diseases can make water unsafe for swimming and drinking.

To help keep pet waste out of local waterways, always, clean up after your pet. Bring a plastic bag or "pooper scooper" along on your walks.

Around your home, keep waste piles to a minimum. Remove waste from areas kids play, they are the most frequent victims of disease from pet waste.

For children and adults, the best protection against disease is washing hands with soap and water.

So what should you do with the waste you pick up?

You can flush it down the toilet. The water from your toilet goes to a septic system or sewage treatment plant that removes most pollutants.

Cat feces can be flushed, but used litter should be wrapped up tightly and placed in the trash.

You can also bury your



pet's wastes in your yard. Be sure to dig a hole at least five inches deep.

Microorganisms in the soil will break down the waste, remove bacteria and release its nutrients.

These nutrients can act as fertilizers for your lawn and plants.

To prevent disease, the hole should be away from vegetable gardens, lakes, streams and wells.

Never add pet wastes to your compost pile.

The temperatures in the pile will not get high enough to kill disease organisms in pet waste.

Another disposal option for pet wastes is to put it in the trash.

Although this is the easiest disposal solution, it may not be the best. Waste taken to a landfill or incin-

erator still causes pollution problems.

Along with the pleasures of owning a pet come responsibilities.

One of those is properly disposing of your pet's wastes.

For more information, or to arrange a free visit with a runoff management professional, contact Randy Anhorn, administrator/limnologist at the CLFLWD offices at 651-209-9753 or send an e-mail to: randy.ahorn@clflwd.org.

Additional information on the CLFLWD's cost-share program can be found at clflwd.org.

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