

The Importance of Cleaning Up After Your Pet

While typically considered a dirty job, proper pet waste disposal is one that responsible pet owners have to do. Aside from being a common courtesy for the community in which one lives, safe pet waste disposal also provides a number of health benefits for both humans and animals alike. It can protect against exposure to bacterial infections and parasites while also supporting immune systems. The appropriate disposal of waste can even contribute to a healthier and more robust environment. Combined with simple cleaning practices, effective pet waste disposal for animals of all types makes residences and communities safer places in which to live.

Health Risks Posed by Pet Waste

Coming into contact with pet waste can pose several different health risks, including potential bacterial infections and parasitic infestation. An example of a bacterial infection that can present in humans as a result of exposure to pet waste is campylobacteriosis. Transmittable parasites and intestinal worms found in pet excrement include cryptosporidium, toxocariasis, and toxoplasmosis. While the symptoms of each type of bacterial infection and parasite vary, some of them have led to health issues serious enough to result in death. This is one of the many reasons why the proper disposal of pet waste can be considered an important public health issue.

The cleaning of areas exposed to pet excrement is a necessary step to reduce the risk of accidental infection in vulnerable populations. Adventurous children who play outdoors are susceptible to the microscopic dangers found in pet waste. Adults who garden may unknowingly handle pet waste, as animals are naturally attracted to grass and foliage as places to relieve themselves. Infectious pet waste can even pose a threat to other animals. Feces examined or eaten by curious animals can harbor diseases and parasites that can take up residence in a pet's body and cause a multitude of problems.

- [Pets and a Clean House: Can They Coexist?](#)
- [Simple Steps for Avoiding Infections From Dogs and Cats](#)
- [Zoonotic Diseases of Companion Animals](#) (PDF)
- [Commonly Asked Questions About Composting](#) (PDF)

Pet Waste Can Affect Water Quality

Despite ensuring that your pets don't defecate directly into water sources, their waste can still affect community and natural bodies of water. Some pet owners may erroneously assume that depositing excrement into a storm sewer is a viable disposal method. Storm sewers, however, empty into lakes and streams. Along with polluting the water with bacteria and parasites, pet waste that finds its way to natural bodies of water promotes the flowering of unwanted algae and weeds. Chemical reactions that take place in the water after coming into contact with pet waste can also negatively affect wildlife and contribute to the reduction of fish populations.

- [Pet Waste and Water Quality](#) (PDF)
- [Dog Owner Tips: Solve the Storm Water Pollution Problem](#) (PDF)
- [Protect the Water You and Your Pet Love](#) (PDF)
- [Water Quality Protection: Pet Waste](#) (PDF)

How to Properly Dispose of Pet Waste

While there are several methods that pet owners employ to dispose of their animals' excrement, some are better than others in terms of effectiveness, safety, and legality. Burying waste is one of the most natural and safest ways to get rid of excrement. A hole with a depth of about six inches can keep waste safely out of sight and reduce the chances that it will attract other animals. Flushing pet waste is also an acceptable option for individuals who prefer to stay within a home but would appreciate a fast and easy way to dispose of waste. When removing waste and cleaning surface areas, all pet owners should wear disposable gloves to protect their health. After handling waste, wash your hands with soap and water to keep your body free from bacteria and disease.

Remove all remnants of waste from areas near water. This includes drains, ditches, and wells. Avoid attempting to compost pet waste in a garden, as the excrement will not naturally break down and can pose a health hazard to vegetable beds. And think twice about throwing pet waste into your trash can: Local laws may prohibit this activity and classify it as a form of pollution.

- [Dog Cleaning Tips](#)
- [Management of Pet Waste](#)
- [Spotlight on Dog Waste](#) (PDF)
- [How to Clean Up Pet Urine](#)
- [How to Remove Pet Stains and Odors](#)

Sanitizing After Cleaning Up Pet Waste

Sanitizing surfaces and tidying up defecation spaces can be an important part of the cleaning process. Pets that have indoor receptacles for their excrement, like cats, should have those receptacles regularly cleaned and maintained. Removing waste from a litter box at least three times a day and refreshing the litter every week can keep your living space hygienic. If you want to sanitize a litter box before filling it with fresh litter, wash it with water, bleach, and liquid detergent before allowing it to air dry in the sun.

Cleaning and disinfecting can reduce allergens and health problems, like asthma, within a home environment that you share with your pet. It will also guard against the transmission of diseases from pets, especially if your animals tend to have accidents indoors. Should your pet have several consecutive indoor accidents, check with a veterinarian to rule out any health issues that may contribute to this behavior. If your pet is in optimum health, consider signing up for some training and obedience classes.

Always practice good waste disposal and cleaning habits, no matter your pet's species or size. While it can be easy to think that smaller pets with cage habitats pose little to no risk regarding their waste, good cleaning habits can spare you from experiencing symptoms associated with salmonella and shigella. As with litter boxes, daily upkeep of waste confined to cages is important to reduce the spread of infection or illness. Thorough weekly cage cleanings that take place away from your food and water sources can help protect the health of your animals and support the strength of your immune system.

- [Cleaning and Disinfecting in Shelters](#) (PDF)
- [How to Clean a Dog Kennel](#)
- [Spot-Cleaning Cat Cages](#)
- [Cage Hygiene for Rats](#)
- [Cleaning Reptile Cages](#)