

Scoop the Poop

By Jacquelyn Buck

With the start of January means the start to a new year and new resolutions! When thinking about ways to enhance your life, consider making a pledge that will help you improve the health of your pet and water quality. Picking up pet waste is something that is often times associated with taking a pet on a walk, but have you thought about the waste out in your yard? When was the last time that was picked up? Pet waste that sits in one's yard can cause a slew of problems.

You might be asking yourself, "what's the harm in a few piles of dog poop?" Well, for starters, there are a whole lot more than a *few* piles laying around! The American Veterinarian Medical Association estimates that there are [approximately 76 million dogs in the United States](#).

Already, the concept of a few piles is starting to seem bigger, but how much bigger? According to the Environmental Protection Agency, on average a dog will excrete three quarters of a pound of waste per day, which equates to approximately 235lbs of waste per year per dog. So, for the United States alone, we are looking at around 57 million pounds of waste every day or 20.8 trillion pounds of waste every year.

All of that waste has two natural lifecycles that it can go through. One option is pet waste remains wherever the pet chooses to drop it. Pet waste can contain bacteria and viruses that are responsible for the spread of [tapeworm, roundworm, E. coli, and so much more](#). By leaving pet waste sit, it can make other pets sick, but it can also lead to humans contracting [campylobacteriosis, salmonellosis, and toxocariasis, which may cause abdominal](#)



[cramps, fever, coughing or wheezing, hives, and possibly permanent vision damage](#). Some people believe that it biodegrades quickly, therefore is out of sight and out of mind. However, the process to biodegrade pet waste takes approximately a year to complete. It is a common assumption that waste will make a good fertilizer, however it is more likely to kill the surrounding area or turn it yellow than to provide nutrients for your lawn.

Alternatively, dog waste can be washed away, ending up in our waterways. Pet waste in waterways is not only an unappealing concept, but it is actually more gross than you may know. Have you ever walked past a waterbody that was green and smelly? Perhaps it was murky and there were signs advising people to avoid swimming, boating, and fishing in the water. These are all byproducts of the excess nutrients decomposing in the water, allowing for a rapid growth in algae. The algae is unappealing to look at, but the pathogens listed above make the water unsafe for recreational use!

So when thinking of ways to help improve your life, consider an option that rings in the new year with better water quality and better health for your pet and neighbors.