



# Natural Resource Bulletin

**Park Pet Etiquette**

**2012.4.1**

## **Do the Doo: Pick Up After Your Pet**

Leaving poop behind not only has serious impacts on water and soil quality in your park, but it also impacts human health and aesthetics negatively for the whole neighborhood.

**Bad for Water:** Research indicates non-human waste represents a significant source of bacterial contamination in urban watersheds. In addition to harmful bacteria, pet waste releases nutrients, such as nitrogen, into local water systems. While some nitrogen is essential to natural ecosystems, too much nitrogen overloads the system.

**Bad for Soil and Native Plants:** Increases in nitrogen levels—caused by pet waste—change local soil composition, favoring non-native weed growth over natives.

**Bad for Wildlife:** Wild creatures often use droppings, or scat, as a way to mark territories. An abundance of pet waste can deter small predators such as weasels and bobcats from doing the good work of controlling rodent populations in our open space areas. Reduced water and soil quality degrades natural ecosystems and reduces productivity. Low-functioning ecosystems are not able to provide the essential services we expect such as naturally cleaning air and water in our city.

**Bad for Humans:** Harmful bacteria in local streams and wetlands may not affect your drinking water directly, but purposefully polluting any water in any watershed is bad news for users downstream. AND, let's face it, who wants to walk a trail littered with left-behind dog doo?

## **Love Your Pet, Leash Your Pet**

A leash is the best way to ensure a fun, safe and conflict-free park experience for you, your dog, other park users, their dogs, and local wildlife:

- Leashes protect your dog from natural hazards such as rattlesnakes, porcupines, coyotes, and from sick or injured wildlife.
- Unleashed dogs can be injured or killed by human hazards such as bicycles, maintenance and patrol vehicles, other dogs, and equestrian users.
- Unleashed dogs harass, injure, and sometimes kill wildlife. A dog that gives chase to wildlife may be lost or injured, or killed in the chase.
- Unleashed dogs create conflicts, generate complaints and potentially injure themselves, other open space users and other dogs.
- Aurora's leash law is enforced in all parks, natural areas, trails and open space properties. Failure to leash your dog can result in fines.
- Chronic leash law violation areas may result in domestic dogs bans from your favorite park, open space or trail.

## **Quick Facts:**

### **Top excuses for NOT picking up dog poop:**

**Wild animals don't pick up after themselves; why should I pick up after my dog?**

Dog doo is not the same as native wildlife waste. Dog waste introduces harmful contaminants and too many nutrients into wild systems.

**I did not have a bag.**

Use bags provided at pet-pick up courtesy stations. Plan ahead and bring a bag (or two) along with you any time you head out for a walk.

**I could not find it.**

If your dog is on a leash it is easy to keep track of where the doo is done.

**It grosses me out.**

You may think it is gross to remove dog waste, but what is more disgusting is trying to enjoy a trail or park that is covered with abandoned, stinky doo.

### **Do the right thing with the doo, no excuses!**

Failure to immediately remove pet excrement can result in fines, pet bans or pet closure areas

