

# PET WASTE AND WATER POLLUTION



## What is the Township's policy on pet waste?

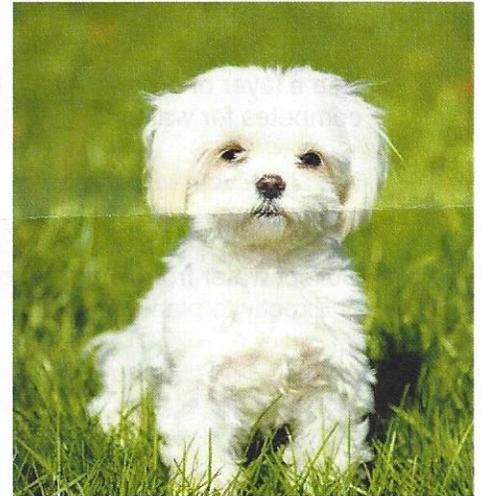
Empire Township's Ordinance considers pet (animal) waste to be a pollutant. While it is not illegal to leave pet waste in your own yard, the Township asks that you pick up after your pooch if they leave waste on public property to reduce the movement of bacteria into water or into areas where it can be stepped on.

## Why does pet waste in my yard pollute water?

When pet waste is left on a lawn and is later rained on, it leaches bacteria, viruses and parasites (such as worms and giardia) into storm water, which can threaten the health of humans and animals. It has been estimated that a single gram of dog waste can contain 23 million fecal coliform bacteria. Pet waste also contains nutrients that promote weed and algae growth in lakes and rivers. This is the same as when too much fertilizer is used – it turns waterbodies into a mucky, green color. Picking up dog waste helps keep our recreation areas clean, safe and beautiful.

## What about other animals?

It is true that squirrels, geese and other wildlife also contribute to water pollution. However, these animals tend to spread out waste across the landscape, whereas dog waste tends to be concentrated in yards, pens and along sidewalks/paths. Cats usually bury their waste, so it does not get into waterways as easily.



## How do I properly dispose of pet waste?

When nature calls, the best option is flush pet waste down the toilet where it will be treated at the sewage treatment plant just like human waste. You can always pick it up in a plastic bag and throw it into the garbage. Pet waste bag dispensers are located in some township parks, please use them.





## The Water Page

## Saving water on your landscape adds up quickly.

Leave lower branches on trees and shrubs and allow leaf litter to accumulate on the soil. This keeps the soil cooler and reduces evaporation.

Start a compost pile. Using compost in your garden or flower beds adds water-holding organic matter to the soil.

Use a layer of organic mulch on the surface of your planting beds to minimize weed growth that competes for water.

Next time you add or replace a flower or shrub, choose a low-water-use plant and save up to 550 gallons each year.

Collect water from your roof by installing gutters and downspouts. Direct the runoff into rain barrels or directly to plants and trees.

Adjust your lawn mower to the height of 1.5 to 2 inches. Taller grass shades roots and holds soil moisture better than short grass.

Leave lawn clippings on your grass, this cools the ground and holds in moisture.

Aerate your lawn periodically. Holes every six inches will allow water to reach the roots, rather than run off the surface.

While fertilizers promote plant growth, they also increase water consumption. Apply the minimum amount of fertilizer needed.

Catch water in an empty tuna can to measure sprinkler output. 3/4 to 1 inch of water is enough to apply each time you irrigate. Apply water only as fast as the soil can absorb it.

Check your sprinkler system frequently and adjust sprinklers so only your lawn is watered and not the house, sidewalk or street.

Minimize evaporation by watering during the early morning hours when temperatures are cooler and winds are lighter. Don't water your lawn on windy days when most of the water blows away or evaporates.

Water only when necessary. If walking across the lawn leaves footprints (blades don't spring back up), then it is time to water. More plants die from over-watering than from under-watering. Signs of overwatering: Leaves turn lighter shades of green or yellow, and young shoots wilt.

Water dry spots by hand instead of running the whole irrigation system longer.

**Spring is a great time to give your irrigation system a checkup to ensure it's working efficiently. Remember to periodically check your sprinkler system valves for leaks, and to keep sprinkler heads in good shape.**