The Poop Toss Game

A fun and simple game to teach responsible pet waste disposal

Overview
Pollution from pet waste is a problem across the Puget Sound region – but it can be prevented. Pet waste carries e-coli, fecal coliform and giardia among other contaminants. We developed the poop toss game to engage a wide audience and start conversations about **backyard** waste disposal. The game is also a tool to encourage participants to sign a “**Scoop the Poop**” pledge, and an effective opportunity for distributing point-of-contact promotional “prizes” that encourage long term behavior change.

Three Central Elements
1. **The Game**: This is the hook that will draw interest.
2. **The Message**: To ensure that people, pets, and local waterways are kept safe from bacterial pollution, **Scoop the Poop, Bag it, and Put it in the trash**.
3. **The Pledge**: A written commitment to pick up pet waste. This reinforces the message and gives you a chance to talk about the impacts of unmanaged pet waste on pet health.

How to Run the Game
Two people are needed to operate the three central elements of the game.

**Person 1**: Draws attention and invites people to play the game, then shows participants how to play:
A. Take a plastic bag from the mini trash can.
B. To make it feel more like a **backyard** activity have players use the hand trowel to scoop up a “poop” and place it in a plastic bag.
C. Ask participants where they think pet waste should go. No matter what their answer, tell them it is legal to put poop in the trash.
D. Player tosses bagged poop into the trash. (The player is modeling the behavior we want them to do at home. Depending on number of people waiting, give participants a few tries or suggest they move closer.)

**Person 1** will also have to replenish the “poops” and plastic bags when the backyard lawn runs out. It’s important for the participant to “win” if possible; this aligns a positive emotional response to picking up pet waste and putting it in the trash.

**Person 2**: Leads those who finish the game (and those who don’t want to play) to the pledge and “prize” table. This is a great opportunity to talk about the pledge and the reasons why picking up dog waste is important. Remind participants that pet waste should be thrown in the trash, not buried, not thrown in the yard waste/compost, or left on the lawn – it’s not fertilizer!

Setting Up the Backyard

**Materials**
1. Pledge table (includes prizes and promotional materials)
2. Yard waste bin (attach laminated “Do not compost” sign)
3. Trash can (attach laminated “We Scoop” sign)
4. “Hole” (a box under artificial lawn) and shovel (attach “Do not bury” sign to the artificial lawn.)
5. Artificial lawn
6. Bean-bag poops
7. Mini trash can with plastic bags
8. “Come Play the Poop Toss Game” sign (display on an easel or A-frame)
9. Hand trowel
10. “Do the Right Thing” poster (doubles as backboard)
Tips of Person 1: How to Draw People In

- Set up the game in a way that is visible and inviting.
- Be outgoing; invite people to play a free game.
- Encourage adults to give it a try, not just the kids.
- Offer prizes! Plastic bag dispensers and other point-of-contact reminders are great at reinforcing the “Scoop it. Bag it. Trash it.” message.
- Engage those who don’t want to play the game by inviting them to sign the pledge, or simply talk to them about pet health and picking up waste.
- Point out that we are throwing pet waste in the trash, not in yard waste bins or not in a hole in the ground. Remind participants that pet poop is not fertilizer!

Tips for Person 2: How to talk about Pet Waste

Since pet waste pollution impacts us in many ways there are lots of opportunities to engage participants in conversation. People are usually interested in pet health and how it affects their own family members. A few may be interested in the environment, water quality, or how to talk to their neighbor about pet waste. Listen to your audience and tailor your responses to meet their interests. Busy folks are less likely to fully read a brochure. The following four talking points can help you share information quickly:

1. **Scoop the Poop, Bag it, and Put it in the Trash** – This is the best way to ensure that people, pets, and local waterways are kept safe from bacterial pollution.

2. **Healthy pets** - Regular backyard scooping prevents worms & other harmful bacteria from contaminating your yard and your pets.

3. **Healthy kids** - Humans can be exposed to the same worms, parasites and harmful bacteria as pets. Clean waters mean safer places for pets and people to play.

4. **Clean yards** – Pet waste sitting in the backyard is essentially raw sewage. Harmful bacteria in pet waste can persist in the landscape for many weeks and contribute to polluted stormwater.

Frequently Asked Questions

**Should I put pet poop in the yard waste bin or compost it?**

Neither. Solid waste collectors ask that you put pet poop in a plastic bag in the garbage. You cannot guarantee that your compost gets hot enough to kill the harmful pathogens found in pet waste. Someday commercial composting technologies may be able to solve the challenges of dealing with raw sewage, but until then please keep pet waste out of the compost and yard waste bin.

**How about burying the pet poop?**

Burying is not a good option. Bacteria from buried pet waste can seep into the ground water table, contaminating it in a similar manner as if it had been left above ground. This is particularly a problem in Puget Sound because of high ground water.

**I should use biodegradable plastic bags, right?**

Well, the garbage all goes to a landfill and once there it won’t degrade – not even biodegradable plastic. So save your money and look for bags that have a high amount of post-consumer content. That means the bags are made with lots of plastic that was previously used, collected, and turned into bags. Dog Poop bags are a great way to use recycled plastic!

**What do I do with the “We Scoop” Sticker?**

Apply the “We Scoop” sticker to your garbage can. It’ll tell you’re your neighbors you are a responsible dog owner. Some of your neighbors still think it is illegal to put poop in the garbage – but when they see that you do and you are telling the whole world, your neighbors will know they can too.

**Scoop the Poop, Bag it, and Put it in the Trash!**

For more information contact:

Dani Driscoll, Senior Planner II
Snohomish County Conservation and Natural Resources, Surface Water Management
Phone: (425)512-6860
Email: danielle.driscoll@snoco.org