When your pet goes on the lawn, remember ... it doesn't just go on the lawn.

When our pets leave those little surprises, rain can wash pet waste and bacteria into our storm drains that can pollute our waterways. So what to do? Simple! Dispose of it properly. Then that little surprise gets treated like it should.

Clean water is important to all of us.

It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years, sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now, more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil, fertilizers from farms and gardens, and failing septic tanks. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too-and that adds up to a pollution solution!

Why do we need clean water?

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, drinking water, and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water-and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, streams, marine, and ground waters clean.

What's the problem with pet waste?

It's a health risk to pets and people, especially children. It's a nuisance in our neighborhoods. Pet waste is full of bacteria that can make people sick. If it's washed into the storm drain and ends up in our water, the bacteria ends up in fish. People who eat those fish can get very sick. Unless people take care of it, the waste enters our water with no treatment.

Clean Water Tips: How can you get rid of pet waste and help keep our waters clean?

- Never dump pet waste into a storm drain or catch basin, since the average dog dropping produces 3 billion fecal coliform bacteria.

- If your community doesn't regulate pet waste (e.g., "scooper" law), try to make it a priority of your local governing body. Encourage your community to adopt a "pooper-scooper" ordinance.

- Scoop up and seal pet wastes in a plastic bag. Dispose of properly, in the garbage.