

The Scoop on **POOP**: Important reasons to pick up after your pooch

#1 It's the neighbourly thing to do!

- People get very upset when they find dog poop left on their lawns. Let's all be respectful of other people's property!
- In Abbotsford, leaving poop behind is considered littering. Dog owners are expected to pick up after their dogs while walking around the neighbourhood or when visiting a local park.
- It is really gross to step in dog poop by accident, and no one wants it to happen to them! We should all be responsible for keeping our city clean.

#2 Dog poop can carry harmful levels of bacteria, parasites and viruses that can be spread to other dogs, wildlife, and people.

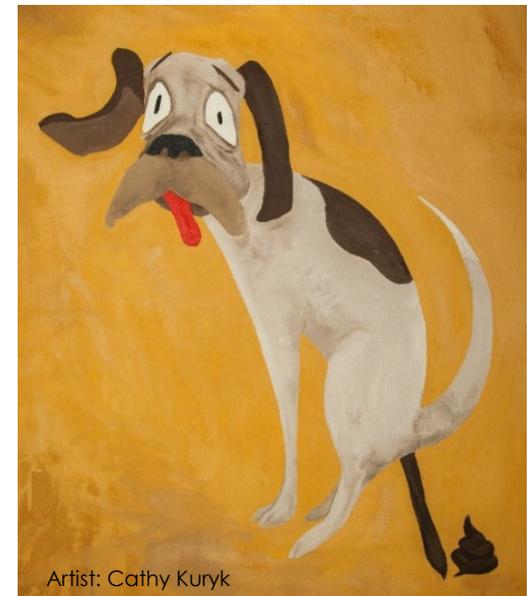
- Some bacteria, viruses and parasites can be passed from animals to people. These are called 'zoonotic diseases'.
 - This includes salmonella, E. coli, hookworm, roundworm, tapeworm, ringworm and giardia ("beaver fever").
 - Children under five, pregnant women, seniors over 65 and people with a weakened immune system are at a higher risk to get really sick if they come in contact with contaminated feces, soil or water.
- Puppies (especially before their vaccinations), small dogs and dogs with weak immune systems are most at risk when they come into contact with contaminated feces, soil or water.
 - Certain breeds can also be more susceptible to diseases. For example, Rottweilers, Dobermans, Labs and German shepherds are at a higher risk for contracting parvovirus.
- Many of these bacteria, parasites and viruses can survive a long time in the environment, and will contaminate soil and water the feces come into contact with.
 - Giardia can survive for up to seven weeks in the soil or up to three months in water.
 - Parvovirus can survive in the environment for months.

#3 It is better for the local environment.

- Dog poop does not make a very good fertilizer and may take a year or more to completely decompose.
- As poop breaks down, the harmful bacteria and parasites can be washed through storm drains into the local waterways causing unclean drinking water, unsafe swimming areas and damage to local plants and wildlife.
 - The higher concentration of nitrogen and phosphorus found in dog poop helps algae growth which is harmful to aquatic plants and fish.
 - Some bacteria and parasites can survive days, weeks or even a year or more in contaminated soil and water.

How to help prevent the spread of harmful bacteria, parasites and viruses:

WASH YOUR HANDS with soap in warm water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer (especially before you eat!), and keep our neighbourhoods clean by picking up that dog poop!



Bacteria found in dog poop include:

Campylobacteriosis – causes diarrhea, cramps, and fever. Can be life-threatening for people with a compromised immune system. It cannot survive drying or exposure to oxygen.

E. Coli – many strains are harmless but certain strains can cause nausea, diarrhea, fever, urinary tract infections or even kidney failure. It can be deadly for people with a weakened immune system and can contaminate waterways.

Salmonellosis – most common bacterial infection. Causes fever, headaches, vomiting and diarrhea, and in some cases can lead to chronic arthritis.

Parasites found in dog poop include:

Roundworms – one of the most common parasites in dogs and cats and can cause vomiting, diarrhea, a dull coat, and weight loss. Found primarily in racoons, but can infect rodents, dogs, and people. Can cause nerve or eye damage in some people. Treated with de-worming medication.

Hookworms – live in the small intestine of dogs and cats, and can cause intestinal bleeding, anemia and diarrhea. Can cause painful itchy skin infections on people. The larvae can survive three to four weeks in the environment.

Whipworms – can cause chronic diarrhea, bloody stool, weight loss and anemia. Treatment is difficult due to the location of the whipworms in the colon so several deworming treatments are needed. People can become infected through contaminated soil or produce.

Tapeworms – transmitted by fleas or ingesting wildlife infested with the worms. Can infect humans through their pores or by ingestion. Will attach to intestines and absorb nutrients from their host. These do not normally cause serious problems, but can irritate the dog and make them drag their bums across the floor, or lick themselves excessively. Easily treated with de-worming medication.

Giardia – can live in soil and more commonly water. The type of giardia that infect dogs and cats is different from the type that infects people. Causes diarrhea and giardiasis, children are most at risk for coming in contact with contaminated items.

Viruses in dog poop include:

Parvovirus – a highly contagious disease which can survive up to 12 months in the environment. Causes lethargy, vomiting, fever, diarrhea and even death in pets. Puppies are at the greatest risk, particularly if they are still too young to be vaccinated or have not had all the required booster shots. There are no medications that can kill the Parvovirus, so treatment involves boosting the dog's immune system, antibiotics and symptom management which will take five to seven days at the veterinary hospital.

The intention of sharing this information is to try and improve the community we all live in. Hopefully by creating awareness about the potential problems with dog waste, responsible dog parents will be more careful to pick up after their pets.

Personally, I have always tried to pick up after my dog (and now my clients' dogs) when walking around the neighbourhood (with the exception of the occasional invisible poop in the pile of brown leaves, or the messy diarrhea poop on rocks which is almost impossible to completely pick up). However, before I learned more about Parvo and zoonotic diseases I was much less responsible when I took my dog off leash unless he went right on the trail. When I started to do some research I became very concerned about the effects dog waste can have on the health of other dogs, as well as people. I am a firm believer that puppy kisses are okay within reason and unfortunately have even received a 'freshly eaten poop kiss' as well as a 'toilet water kiss' - yuck. I work with pets and pick up pet waste daily and I am perfectly healthy. I do make sure to always wash or disinfect my hands between visits, before eating and after disposing of the poop I pick up. The greatest danger of being a dog walker is actually tripping and falling which happens too often! One of my concerns with leaving poop behind is the concentration of people and dogs in the city and the fact that I see so much dog poop in all neighbourhoods and parks that I walk around throughout Abbotsford. Maybe I just think about dog poop way too much! Thanks for reading, and I hope you pick up that poop too!

Jennifer Skowronek
Certified Professional Pet Sitter
Owner of Furrymotel Petcare

Sources and further reading:

www.cdc.gov
www.cpha.ca
www.ipsos-na.com
www.abbotsford.ca
www.clearchoicescleanwater.org
www.pets.webmd.com
www.petsit.com

In a 2013 eNation survey:

57 per cent of Canadians polled own a pet

Cat owners = 35 per cent

Dog owners = 32 per cent

Population of Abbotsford and Chilliwack combined = 224,000

Number of owners/families that have at least 1 licenced dog in Abbotsford and Chilliwack = 12,000 (Number courtesy of the Fraser Valley Regional District)

The actual number of dogs will be much higher since many families have two or more dogs!

