

The Great Dog Poop Debate

Poop: It's a bigger problem than you might think, at least from an environmental perspective.

By Denise Flaim

Although dog owners have gotten accustomed to scooping dog waste, tightly knotted plastic bags exact a huge toll. They are not biodegradable in landfills, and so turn into what one dog park frequenter called "a plastic-wrapped time capsule."

A few high-tech approaches are pending. For example, some cities are experimenting with methane digesters, which convert dog waste into methane gas, a viable energy source. But in the meantime, here are some environmentally conscious options:

Biodegradable poop bags. Some bags on the market advertise themselves as earth-friendly, and are made of natural materials such as corn. But if the landfill is anaerobic, or "air-locked," these bags will not break down any more than any other biodegradable product will in the absence of oxygen.

Flush it! This simple solution is the best one, according to most experts. Flushing dog waste down the very same toilet that dispenses yours is environmentally sound and earth-friendly.

Composting. Creating a compost pile for your dog's droppings is a fine idea, as long as you separate that pile from the one you use to generate compost for your vegetable garden. Parasites and bacteria in canine feces can survive the heat of a compost pile, presenting a health hazard.

Doggie septic tanks. Such below-ground systems are commercially available, but be aware of any underground water sources that could be affected by leaching.

Some of these options are fairly simple, some are complex, and one is arguably icky, but nobody said it was easy being green.

Denise Flaim is a DOG FANCY contributing editor.

Find more ideas
for ways to be a green dog owner.