

# PET WASTE and WATER QUALITY



## Stormwater Pollution Prevention: It's Up To Us

In Mesa County, runoff from rain storms and snowmelt flows directly to the Colorado River with NO treatment. Pollution of storm water is a serious problem for wildlife and for the people who live near streams or use them for recreation. Some common pollutants in storm runoff include spilled oil, fuel, and fluids from vehicles and heavy equipment; pet wastes; construction debris; pesticides or weed killers; and materials such as used motor oil, antifreeze, and paint products that people pour or spill into a street or storm drain.

Mesa County is working with citizens and businesses to improve the quality of stormwater runoff. We hope you will join us, by keeping pet wastes out of our rivers and streams.



## Are You Polluting Lakes and Streams?

PET OWNERS, TAKE HEED...When you clean up after your pet, do you dump the waste in the street or storm drainage system? Do you leave it to decay on the sidewalk or on the grass near the street? If so, you may be causing pollution or health problems. Pollutants from improperly disposed pet waste may be washed into the storm drainage system by rain or melting snow. Storm runoff in Mesa County receives NO treatment. When pet waste is washed into lakes or streams, the waste decays, using up oxygen and sometimes releasing ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures kill fish.

Pet wastes also contain nutrients that encourage algae growth. Overly fertile water becomes cloudy and green --unattractive for swimming, boating and fishing. Perhaps most importantly, pet waste can carry bacteria or parasites which could make water unsafe for contact. Some of these include:

- Campylobacteriosis - bacterial infection
- Salmonellosis - bacterial infection
- Toxocariasis - roundworm infection
- Toxoplasmosis - protozoan parasite infection
- Giardiasis - protozoan parasite infection

## What Can You Do?

Cleaning up after your pet can be as simple as taking a plastic bag or pooper scooper along on your next walk. What should you do with the waste you pick up? No solution is perfect, but we recommend two:

1. Flush it down the toilet. The water in your toilet goes to a sewage treatment plant that removes most pollutants before the water reaches a river or stream. To prevent plumbing problems, don't flush debris or litter or cat litter. Cat feces may be flushed but used litter should be put in a securely closed bag in the trash.
2. Put it in the trash. This is probably the easiest but may not be the best solution. Put waste in a securely closed bag and deposit in trash.

\*Because pet waste may carry bacteria and pathogens, you should not bury it or put it in a vegetable garden. Do not put wastes in a compost pile. The pile won't get hot enough to kill bacteria/pathogens in the waste\*

## Spill Response

Dial 911 -or  
State of Colorado Environmental Response  
(877) 518-5608

**CDPHE Water Quality Control Division**  
(303)-692-3500

**Mesa County Health Department**  
(970)-248-6900

**Mesa County Stormwater Division**  
(970)-263-7401

