

# Takin' Care of Business

Minimize Fido's environmental impact.

By Jessica A. Knoblauch

The federal government says dogs produce almost 300 pounds of waste per year.

That's some eco paw print.

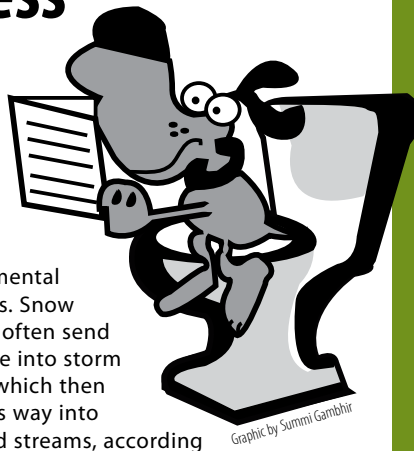
"We have two loveable and gorgeous labs, but what comes out of them is hardly gorgeous or loveable," said Sarah Waddell, an Illinois resident. "After a two-week cold snap, my husband and I trekked out to the yard wearing rubber gloves to retrieve almost 60 pounds of dung." The Waddells bagged it and threw it in the garbage. "We didn't know what else to do with it."

They are not alone. Almost 39 percent of households own at least one dog, according to the Humane Society of the United States. Most dog-owners simply throw the waste away, adding to the ever-growing pile of plastic bags found in landfills.

Others leave it where it drops, creating

different environmental problems. Snow and rain often send pet waste into storm sewers, which then makes its way into lakes and streams, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Some city governments are tackling the dog poop problem head on. Last year, San Francisco began collecting dog waste and converting it into methane. The program is a great idea, but for those of us who don't live on the left coast, see the sidebar on the right for other environmentally friendly options for getting rid of Rover's waste. 🐾



## Doggy "Do" Quick Tips

- **Use biodegradable poop bags.** Look for the ASTM D6400 specification, which requires bags to degrade at a similar rate as an apple. Once used, toss the bag in the garbage where it will begin to erode.
- **Flush it.** Use water-soluble bags made of polyvinyl alcohol film. Flush the used bag down the toilet and the septic system or sewage treatment plant takes care of the rest.
- **Install a pet waste digester.** Dog owners need only drop the waste into these mini-septic systems and add water and digester agent. The liquefied dog poop drains into the surrounding soil, creating nutrient rich dirt.
- **Become the bag lady.** Use plastic bags that your not so environmentally friendly friends are about to throw out. At the very least, they are put to good use before entering the landfill.

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# Myth Buster

Myths about car idling exist.

Flip the page upside down to see if you fall for any.

Story and Photo by Sarah Crespi

**Myth # 1** Cars like to be warm and toasty before hitting the road.

**Myth # 2** It takes more gas to restart the car than to let it idle for a few minutes.

**Myth # 3** Frequent restarting harms the ignition and engine.

**Myth # 4** Idling in a no-parking zone keeps you from getting a ticket.

**Myth # 5** Switching off the ignition does little to save the environment.



Turning the key on idling is an example of a small change, like turning off the lights when you leave a room, that can have a big impact if widely adopted. Next time you're waiting for a train to go by, turn off the engine and make a big difference!

**Truth to #1** It's unnecessary to warm a car up for more than a few seconds, even on cold mornings. The best way to warm up the car is to drive at moderate speeds so that all parts are heated at once.

**Truth to #2** Idling for 10 seconds or more uses more fuel than restarting.

**Truth to #3** For most cars restarting causes little harm to the ignition and engine, and those costs associated with wear are recovered in fuel savings. (Environment Canada)

**Truth to #4** Having the car on won't necessarily save you a ticket, and it definitely wastes gas.

**Truth to #5** A passenger car that idles for 10 minutes a day emits just under 500 pounds of carbon dioxide a year. It also uses more than 25 gallons of gas per year.

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