

Protect Your Pet and Keep LA Healthy

Los Angeles's wonderful weather conditions allow for ample time to be spent outdoors. This is especially the case for residents who own dogs and love to treat their companions to long walks and trips to the local park.

When enjoying such activities, dog owners must be careful about maintaining their dog's health. There are two life-threatening diseases known as *Canine Parvovirus* and *Canine Distemper* that are increasingly reaching the digestive systems of our healthy pets. Without catching the disease early enough or providing your pet with extensive hospitalization, serious ramifications can occur including partial or total paralysis, irreparable nerve damage, vomiting and diarrhea. There is also a parasite found in dog waste known as *Giardia*, which not only affects dogs, but also causes humans to have diarrhea and abdominal pain. Although *Giardia* is easier to treat, it also is more prevalent throughout communities.

Recently, the South Los Angeles Animal Shelter discovered a *Giardia* breakout, which resulted in 30-40 dogs being infected. Fortunately, none of the pets had to be euthanized, as all infected dogs were promptly treated. Dr. Steven Feldman, of Los Angeles Animal Services, stated "The transferring of *Giardia* can be from animal to animal, person to person, animal to person or person to animal. Prevention is based on good sanitation practices to prevent ingestion of any feces, contaminated food, water, or objects. It is important to dispose of waste materials in such a way that they cannot contaminate surface or ground water."

The increased spreading of such diseases is in part due to pet owners not picking up after their dogs. When someone doesn't pick up after their dog, your pet's chances of getting infected with one of these diseases are increased.

As a matter of fact, not picking up after your dog is also very harmful to the environment. It is important to understand the impact unattended dog waste has on our waters. Unattended dog waste gets unintentionally washed down into our storm drain system when it rains. This toxic mix of dog waste and water then flows **untreated** into our local waterways and ocean. The bacteria found in the fecal matter affects our aquatic life, those who swim at our beaches, the tourism industry and our economy. This is a consequence that can negatively impact not only our pet's health, but our own health as well.

It is important that as dog owners, we do our part and pick up after our pet and remind our neighbors and friends to do the same. This is especially important because if your neighbor isn't picking up after their dog, you and your healthy pet have the potential to be affected by their negligence. Remember to do the right thing. Pick up after your dog and continue to protect our pets and the environment. Take action today by calling (800) 974-9794 to receive a *free* dispenser with doggie waste bags.

For more information on how you can help prevent stormwater pollution, please call (800) 974-9794 or visit LAstormwater.org.