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### Please Pick Me

Every morning, when I walk outside my house with my dogs, I have to pick up the dog poop left by my neighbors' pets on my front yard. This action is unneighborly and illegal. As a dog owner, it is in my best interest to give a friendly reminder to people—especially other dog owners—that picking up after our dogs is very important because not only does dog waste contaminate the environment, but it also affects our health. We pet owners need to do what is right by picking up and disposing of our dogs' waste properly.

Pet waste is unsightly and makes our community look dirty and our backyards, parks, and streets hazardous places. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a single gram of dog feces contains twenty-three types of different bacteria, including *E. coli*, salmonella, and giardia, which are known to cause cramps, diarrhea, intestinal illness, and serious kidney disorders in humans. Also, the Centers of Disease Control and Protection (CDC) says that dog waste carries worms such as round worms, whipworms, hookworms, tapeworms and heart worms. Parvo, a common deadly virus for puppies that do not have the proper immunizations, is often transmitted by infected dog waste. So, while we are enjoying watching our kids play ball in the park, or simply resting comfortably in the grass, we are exposing them to harmful bacteria.

It's important that we also consider the city, county, and state workers who pick up after our dogs when we don't. It is unpleasant it is for them when the lawn tractor and weed-eater

picks up this waste and they get pieces of it in their own clothes and shoes? Gross, right! This is only a small insight into the points that came out of my conversation with Jacinto Rodriguez, a contracted employee for the City of El Paso who does some of this dirty work for us.

Another reason dog owners need to pick the waste is to maintain and protect water from contamination. In the article “The Connection between Pet Waste and Water Quality,” by the Thurston County Public Health and Social Services Environmental Health Division, the author points out that “The bacteria in dog waste is often washed down storm drains and into ditches, streams, lakes, and inlets, and they can travel for miles in the water. . . . [B]acteria in pet waste can make it unsafe to harvest [fish], shellfish or swim in our waters.” This is not a small concern. Traci Watson, a journalist from *USA Today* news, points out in her article “Dog Waste Poses Threat for Water” that 40% of Americans don’t pick up their dogs feces. By picking up after our dogs, we can also help make our communities healthier.

If we still need another reason to pick up after our dogs, maybe money will do it. In my conversation with Andrew Hager, Supervisor at the El Paso Municipal Court, I learned that the city ordinance, Title 7, Chapter 7.08, Section 7.08.010 states that the fine for animal droppings (owners who have the control of their pets and do not pick up the waste) and animal feces removal (walking an animal in a private or public place and do not pick up the waste) are misdemeanor offences of Class C, and the fine for violating this code is \$105 dollars.

I would like to encourage my community to pick up after our dogs because we have too many good reasons to do it. We must do this to take care of our environment, our own and pet’s health, practice neighborly courtesy, and because is the right thing to do. After all, it is the law. As dog owners, we can end this cycle and be the kind of thoughtful, generous people we set out to be when we first took our best friend into our homes.