



# News and Information From Violet Township

## Pet Waste and Lawn Litter: Not a Good Recipe for Storm Water Systems

*By Tommy Springer, Conservation Technician/Wildlife Specialist, Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District*

With areas across the state suffering the effects of blue-green algae blooms and increased levels of *E. coli* in drinking and recreational waters, it is important to understand how we, at the local level, can do our part to prevent such occurrences.

The City of Pickerington and Violet Township both have extensive storm water drainage systems. Unlike the sewage systems, storm water is not treated and travels directly from the streets, gutters and catch basins into ponds, lakes and streams. This also means any waste materials placed in the path of storm water or dropped into catch basins will end up in these same bodies of water.

Yard debris and pet waste are some of the most common pollutants found in the storm water system. It is important to not only recognize the environmental and public health concerns this type of waste can present, but also to be aware of actions individuals can take to prevent such material from entering the drainage infrastructure.

The two most common types of lawn debris, dead leaves and grass clippings, constantly enter the storm drains through a slow, natural process. The problems associated with this type of litter arise when individuals collect large quantities and place them into the path of flowing storm water. This could include dumping bagged grass clippings directly into a catch basin or raking fallen leaves into a stream.



Individuals can help prevent such occurrences by knowing how to dispose of yard waste properly. For grass clippings, simply allowing cut grass to decompose naturally into the lawn's thatch layer is the best option, as it will replenish nutrients and provide a physical barrier against annual weeds. Bagged grass clippings can either be added to a compost pile or hauled to the nearest composting facility.

Leaves can be used as an alternative to mulch around flower beds and trees, or composted into rich soil for landscaping and gardening. Individuals served by a community leaf pick-up service should place piles of collected leaves on the lawn near the curb and not in the street or gutter.

Pet waste can present health concerns because of the harmful bacteria present in it. It can also create physical litter when bagged by pet owners, but disposed of improperly. Pet waste can be properly removed from the yard by burying it under 6 to 12 inches of soil or by bagging it and placing it with household trash.

Do not bury bagged waste, as most bags are not readily biodegradable. Placing pet waste down storm drains or catch basins is not only harmful to the environment, it is also illegal.

The Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District hopes education and awareness now will help reduce storm water pollution in Violet Township and the City of Pickerington, and preserve the quality of surface water in the area.

