Cleaning up after your dog

A guide for the public
Even Toy Breeds, such as Yorkshire Terriers, produce about 100g of faeces per day; compared to Giant Breeds, such as St Bernard, which can produce as much as 1kg per day.

This means that approximately 1,000 tonnes of faeces are produced by dogs in the UK every day!
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Introduction

Disgusting! Revolting! Minging!

Did you know that it is illegal not to clean up your dog’s mess?

If you are in charge of a dog, then it is your responsibility to clean up its mess. If you fail to do so, you may be given a Fixed Penalty Notice by the local council, or by the police. This guide contains a summary of the law relating to dog fouling in Scotland, so that you can avoid breaking the law when you take your dog for a walk.

Get into the habit now: take bags or a poop-scoop with you when you step outside your door, so that you can legally dispose of your dog’s mess.

What’s the Problem?

Studies relating to issues of local concern frequently show that dog fouling rates high on residents’ lists of complaints. When dog owners leave the mess behind on the path or pavement, as soon as someone steps into it, it is also spread elsewhere. Stepping into dog dirt is smelly and difficult to clean out of shoe treads; it spoils the pleasure of a good walk; and makes cleaning the remaining dirt off the ground more difficult.

What many people do not realise is that dog faeces left on the ground also has the potential to cause harm to humans.

The reason why dog faeces used to turn white with time was that dogs’ diets were rich in bonemeal. In recent times this has been replaced by vegetable protein, which is why white faeces are now rarely seen.
Threat to Human Health: Toxocara canis and Toxocariasis

In one survey, although the majority of dog owners stated that they wormed their pet regularly, 9% admitted that their dog had never been wormed. The most common and important roundworm that affects dogs is Toxocara canis (T canis), passing to humans as Toxocariasis. (Toxocara catis is the variant found in cats). The T canis worm uses the bodies of dogs to lay its eggs, which are then passed through the dog’s faeces. The eggs become infectious 2-3 weeks after being deposited by the dog and can survive for up to two years in the local environment. T canis is more commonly found in puppies, although it is estimated that 10-40% of adult dogs also harbour the worm.

Young children are more likely than adults to develop Toxocariasis, which can cause eye damage. This is because children can accidentally ingest the eggs through contact with contaminated soil or sand, while playing in parks and play areas, or by playing with puppies and dogs that have licked fur with T canis eggs stuck to it. Around 20 cases of infection in humans are recorded every year in the UK. In the majority of cases the infection causes only mild symptoms such as stomach upsets and pain, headaches and sore throats, although in some instances eye damage can affect young children. The risk of infection can be greatly reduced by ensuring that children wash their hands before eating and after handling dogs or playing outside.
The Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 came into effect on 22nd October 2003, to protect residents from the risks and dangers of abandoned dog faeces. The Act states that it is an offence for the person in charge of a dog to leave its mess without removing it. ‘Removing’ the faeces does not mean throwing or depositing them onto any other public open space: in other words any place open to the air, to which the public has access, and any common area such as a close, stair or back green.

Both the police and authorised local council staff can issue a fixed penalty notice to someone whom they suspect of committing an offence under the Act. If the person who has been issued with a fixed penalty notice wishes to request a hearing in respect of the offence, he or she must do so in writing, before the expiry of the period for paying. The local council will then notify the Procurator Fiscal that a hearing has been requested.

The fixed penalty due for dog fouling is £40. However, if the notice is not paid within 28 days, this figure is increased to £60. If the increased fine is still not paid, the local council is able to register the unpaid fine as a civil debt and can begin debt collection proceedings.

What happens if the mess is not cleaned up?

Poster: Encams
Dog Owner Convicted of Fouling Offence

A man was fined £80 in Argyll and Bute after he disputed a fixed penalty notice for dog fouling.

An Environmental Warden was patrolling the children’s playing field, in response to a series of complaints by the community council and local council grass cutters, where the man’s dog was seen fouling in the grass. The owner walked away from the playing area without cleaning up the mess and was issued with the fixed penalty notice. When he disputed the notice the case went to Oban District Court, where he received a greater fine.

Criminal Record for Dog Owner

A dog owner in Fife gained a criminal record and was fined £80 after failing to clean up after their pet.

The owner was initially served a fixed penalty notice, by one of the area’s five Dog Wardens, but challenged the decision and requested a hearing. After pleading guilty, however, they were fined £80 by the court.
Exceptions anad Exemptions

Examples of what might be considered a reasonable excuse for failing to clear up after the dog include:

- if the dog has diarrhoea
- if clearing it up presents a risk of injury to the person in charge or to others.

There are also certain people to whom the Act does not apply. These include:

- a blind person, who is in charge of a dog that is used for their guidance
- a disabled person with a physical impairment, who is in charge of a dog that is trained to assist them with their impairment.

What you can do

We can all help to reduce the problem of dog fouling in our local area, to make a walk a more pleasurable experience, and to improve the local environment for residents, workers and visitors.

Dog Owners and Walkers

- By picking up the dog’s mess immediately, you can help to reduce the incidence of contamination by T canis and potential Toxocariasis infection.

- Get into the habit of keeping bags in your jacket pocket or beside the dog lead, or keeping a poop scoop in a visible place, ready to pick up as you walk out of the door. Small bags for dog faeces are not expensive but check first with your council’s Environmental or Cleansing Department, as some provide bags for free. Otherwise equipment can be obtained from pet shops or over the internet.

- Find out where the nearest dog or litter bins are on your walking route. Sometimes you may have to wait until you get home to put the faeces in an outdoor bin.

- Worming tablets are a cheap and easy method of ensuring that your dog does not provide a home for the common roundworm T canis. Consult your vet to ensure that you are giving your dog the correct worming programme.

- Encourage other dog owners and walkers to act responsibly too.
The close bond between humans and dogs can be traced back to Neolithic times when wild dogs became accepted as part of the community, thanks to their practical uses such as providing protection and help with hunting!

Everyone

- Inform your council’s Environmental Health, Cleansing or Parks Department of persistent problem areas, so that they can trace offenders or install more facilities.

- Carry out a campaign in your local area, like the CleanFerry one on the next page, to raise awareness of the problem of dog fouling. Being creative in your efforts can help to capture people’s attention.

- Inform the dog owners that you know of their responsibility by law to pick up after their dog, and of the risks and problems they create if they fail to do so.
CleanFerry’s Poop Scoop Week

Poop Scoop Week in South Queensferry

The environmental group ‘CleanFerry’ was formed in 2000 in response to the terrible litter problem in the local area. As the initiative developed and evolved the group moved on to begin tackling the issue of dog fouling. The local council had already developed Dog Awareness Week in Edinburgh, and CleanFerry decided to ‘piggyback’ on this campaign in order to raise awareness of the problem locally.

The local supermarket, Scotmid, gave permission to base Poop Scoop Week events at the store during June, and a willing volunteer dressed up in a dog costume to catch people’s attention. On a busy Saturday, they encouraged shoppers to plot the worst dog fouling areas on a large-scale map, and the local council supported the campaign with leaflets, freebies, and postcards for people to send to get their free doggy bags. Poop Scoop Week was also widely publicised in the local paper. The campaign has now become an annual event.

Other ideas:

- CleanFerry used a megaphone during Poop Scoop Week to remind dog walkers to pick up after their dogs, and handed out free bags during a tour the local area.

- The council’s Environmental Wardens patrolled the area to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to anyone who did not clean up after their dog.

Far from being an affectionate name for a chocolate bar, a YorkiePoo is in fact a Yorkshire Terrier crossed with a Poodle. Similarly, a Peke-a-Poo is a cross between a Pekingese and a Poodle and a Labradoodle is a Labrador and Poodle!
Further information and useful websites

Community Hygiene Concern
Manor Gardens Centre
6-9 Manor Gardens
London N7 6LA
Helpline: 020 7686 4321
Email: bugbusters2k@yahoo.co.uk
Web: www.chc.org

Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003
The legislation is available online at:
It is also available to buy from the
Stationery Office Ltd., ISBN 0 10 590054 0:
The Stationery Office Ltd
PO Box 29
Norwich NR3 1GN
Telephone orders and general enquiries:
0870 600 5522
Text telephone for the hard of hearing:
0870 240 3701
E-mail: customer.services@tso.co.uk
Web: www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp

Dogs Trust (previously National Canine Defence League)
17 Wakely Street
London EC1V 7RQ
Tel: 020 7837 0006
Web: www.dogstrust.org.uk

Forestry Commission Scotland
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh EH12 7AT
Tel: 0131 334 0303
Email: fscscotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.forestry.gov.uk

The Kennel Club
1-5 Clarges Street
London W1J 8AB
Web: www.thekennelclub.org.uk

The Pet Health Council
1 Bedford Avenue
London WC1B 3AU
Tel: 020 7255 5408
Web: www.pethealthcouncil.co.uk

Provet Ltd
Suite 1
The Slade Building
The Square
Gillingham
Dorset SP8 4AR
Email: Info@provet.co.uk
Web: www.provet.co.uk

Scottish Outdoor Access Code
The booklet ‘What the Scottish Outdoor Access Code means for dog owners’ is
available for download from
Copies are also available in large print from
Scottish Natural Heritage
Tel:01738 444177
or Email: pubs@snh.gov.uk.

Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
603 Queensferry Road
Braehead Mains
Edinburgh EH4 6EA
Tel: 0131 339 0222
Web: www.scottishspca.org

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Disclaimer

This document can only serve as a guide to the law relating to dog fouling. It does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied on as such. In any matter arising the full text of the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 and relevant statutory instruments should be consulted. For details of how to view or purchase a copy of the Act, please see the ‘Further Information’ section.