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## Enviro Pet Waste Network: Keeping poop in the loop!

What is EPWN?

The Enviro Pet Waste Network is a nonprofit that **connects** people around the world to share information and experiences of eco-friendly programs to manage pet waste. The organization aims to help create a more sustainable future by repurposing pet poop and litter into a useful soil enhancer. The result is organics circularity – keeping pet waste out plastic bags and landfills and sending it back to nature.



### Why is your mission important for the planet?

Pet waste is everywhere, but it stays under the radar until it morphs into a public nuisance. Abandoned dog poop spoils a hiking trail, fouls a sidewalk or contaminates a waterway. Trashed pet waste fills a dwindling number of landfills and adds methane to the earth's thinning atmosphere.

Regulatory agencies don't measure waste as a unique waste stream. Few communities want to deal with it in a meaningful way. Finding someone to process it with other organics is close to impossible. But there's a great deal of it and the amount is increasing as the pet population continues to grow.

### How much waste are we talking about?

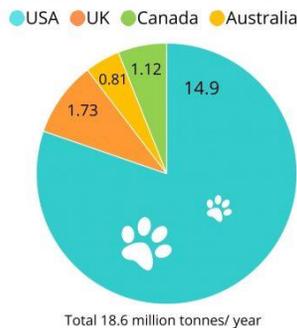
Most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about the impact of their pet's poop on the environment – and for good reason. You pull out a plastic bag, pick up after your dog and toss it in the nearest trash can. Or you tidy up kitty's litterbox, bag it and drop it in with the household garbage. Seems to be just a little bit here, a little bit there. Nothing to be concerned about – right?

But when you add it up, each dog produces 274 lb. (124 kg.) of poop per year and each cat contributes around 110 lb. (50 kg.) of waste per year. In the U.S. alone, 83 million dogs produce 11 million tons (10

million tonnes) of poop a year. That's enough to fill 109 football fields – including end zones – 10 feet deep in dog doo.

Factor in 5.4 million tons (4.9 million tonnes) of waste from 96 million cats and you've got a sizeable, largely overlooked, chunk of disposable material.

**Amount of dog and cat waste produced each year**



### How does pet waste compare with other waste streams?

Few communities that do waste assessments consider pet waste in a separate category. But two waste audits completed by the City of Airdrie, north of Calgary, Alberta, Canada consistently found that 12% of what is in their residential waste is pet waste (<https://www.airdrietoday.com/local-news/pet-waste-allowed-in-green-bins-1420309>). This aligns with an estimate by Kirk Symonds, team lead-education and program delivery with HRM Solid Waste Resources in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, who estimated that pet waste represents eight to 12% of the weight of all residential waste headed to the landfill (<https://www.halifaxexaminer.ca/environment/oh-crap-the-scoop-on-poop/>).

Simply doing the math also bears out this data. Based on quantity, pet waste would rank between textiles and wood on the EPW's municipal waste chart (<https://epwn.org/information/percentage-of-pet-waste-vs-other-trash/>)...if it were there at all. If we want to work out way toward net zero waste, this 12% is one piece of the puzzle that needs to be recognized and fit into the sustainability picture.

### How did EPWN get started?

In 2021 Ruth Miller and Rose Seemann met via social media and agreed that they both had a strong interest in diverting pet waste from landfills, repurposing it to grow healthy plants, and, in the process, discouraging the use and disposal of plastic bags. Ruth had a major role in creating a dog park and starting a successful dog poop composting program for the site in South Australia. Rose operates a program that composts dog waste from dog parks and trails in Colorado, United States. They were a world apart, but that was a small concern in an age of easy video conferencing.

Ruth and Rose were soon joined by two California dog enthusiasts, Linda McKay and Sally Stephens. Sally is chair of the San Francisco Dog Owners Group and has experience working for a nonprofit. Linda has a background in software development and is savvy in technical applications. The foursome met

virtually for months developing a foundation for the new 501 c 3, including a mission, priorities and strategies for serving like-minded people.

When the time was right for carrying out the incubator group's plans, knowledgeable volunteers Herve Duprez and Matt stepped in with invaluable assistance. A colleague of Linda's, Herve lent his technical expertise to enhancing website performance. He also collaborated with Linda to customize a database for the fledgling organization. Matt started a dog waste composting program at his Colorado hometown dog park, so he was in sync with EPWN's objectives. As owner of Causeway Media, he was in a position to provide solid support for the nonprofit's online marketing efforts.



*EPWN's kick-off team: (top) Sally Stephens, Ruth Miller, Rose Seemann, (below) Herve Duprez, Linda McKay and Matt Le Beau*

### **What has EPWN accomplished so far and what are the group's plans?**

In September 2021, EPWN hit the ground running, gathering and incorporating survey data from potential participants and rolling out a website (<https://epwn.org>) as an immediate online resource. Among the offerings are research findings, advice for advocacy and diversion options. The group has also hosted webinars covering a variety of techniques currently being used for sustainable pet waste management. And there are many more innovations approaches to be explored, including showcasing Canadian cities and towns that routinely accept pet poop in residential organic recycling bins.

Check out this five-minute interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhmrRtb0hHI> to find out more about EPWN's vision and next steps. If you need assistance organizing a program or have information to share contact EPWN at <https://epwn.org/contact-epwn/> to join the growing network of participants and advisors.