

Straight Poop on Bags

Some “biodegradable” plastics are more degradable than others . . .

BY NANCY KERNS

What’s the most environmentally responsible thing to do about dog poop? Home composting systems solve the problem at home; we reviewed one in June 2000, and still use it today. But when you’re out in the world with your dog, you have to use something to pick it up and carry it to a trash receptacle. (Of course, carrying the poop to a composting facility, rather than a trash can, is the *most* environmentally friendly thing to do; however, few people are motivated enough to do this.)

Many dog owners save plastic bags for picking up and disposing poop. From an environmental standpoint, however, use of all “regular” plastic bags is bad. Using a plastic bag twice still requires its manufacture (with petrochemical products) and landfill disposal. If people used canvas or other re-

usable bags, it would eliminate untold millions of pounds of waste in our landfills – not to mention visual blight and a hazard to fish and wildlife.

Some people carry a rolled-up newspaper when they walk their dogs, and use that for picking up poop. Newspaper breaks down quickly in landfill, so this seems like a good idea.

But most people like the convenience of a plastic-type bag when they are on the trail, for containing even a sloppy poop – and its smell! Fortunately, there are now bags on the market that offer the convenience of plastic, *and* the ability to break down in landfill. Of course, they’re not free!

The difference between them

Two types of these “environmental” plastic bags currently exist; one is much more

earth-friendly than the other. The first products on the market were described as “biodegradable,” and indeed exhibited the ability to break down physically.

Unfortunately, these polyethylene-based bags fail to break down *chemically*, and leave a residue of small poly pellets or fragments that can build up in the environment (and are doing just that in our oceans). So, while they don’t have as much potential for causing visual blight or taking up space in landfills as “regular” plastic bags, they aren’t completely benign, either.

Today’s newest “ecopolymers” exhibit the characteristics of total biological degradation, resulting in the total mineralization of the substance into carbon dioxide or methane, water, and humic residues – and *no* toxic or poly residues in the soil. This is what was defined by the ASTM in 1999 as “compostable” (per ASTM 6400).

We vastly prefer compostable products. Our highest (four-paw) rating goes to the one compostable bag we found; our lower rating goes to degradable products that cannot make the compostable claim.

It’s best to support local health food stores or independent pet supply stores; look for these products there, first. We’ve supplied sources for online or phone purchase, be aware that most charge for shipping. 🐾



<p>Oops . . . I Pooped does not meet the ASTM 6400 standard as compostable, but its maker seems to feel this is an injustice, and claims on the product label that its bags will degrade in landfill and leave no harmful residues. Label claims are one thing; we’ll reserve our top rating for those that pass the tests.</p>	 <p>OOPS . . . I POOPED Can be purchased from oopsipooped.net, (888) 811-8804</p> <p>\$8 + \$2 shipping 88 qty. 7" x 9.5"</p>
<p>One of our former top picks due to its thickness (double that of most bags), we have downgraded Mutt Mitts in favor of compostable bags.</p>	 <p>MUTT MITTS Mfg: Finny Pet Products Can be purchased from Intelligent Products, Inc. pickupmitts.com, (800) 697-6084</p> <p>\$16.95 + shipping 100 qty. 9" x 13"</p>
<p>The Kyjen Company’s Cornstarch Pooch Pickup Bags: Good product, a good size, a good price . . . but not compostable.</p>	 <p>CORNSTARCH POOCH PICKUP BAGS Can be purchased from Silver Pet Products, silverpet.com (800) 567-9033</p> <p>\$7.50 + shipping 100 qty. 6" x 14.5"</p>
<p>Our top pick carries the seal indicating it has passed ASTM 6400 testing for a compostable bag. We found BioBags at an online store that does not charge for shipping – and also sells compostable bags for household use (kitchen, lawn and leaf, etc.). Here’s an important caveat: These bags are less durable than the others. Double-bagging may be necessary.</p>	 <p>BIOBAG (DOG) Made in Norway Can be purchased from dirtworks.net, (800) 769-3856</p> <p>\$11.85 incl. shipping 100 qty. (2 boxes) 7.75" x 11.5"</p>

<p>WHOLE DOG JOURNAL'S 0-4 PAWS PRODUCT RATING:</p>	
	<p>AS GOOD AS IT GETS. WE ENJOY & APPROVE OF THE PRODUCT.</p>
	<p>A GOOD PRODUCT, BUT WITH ONE OR TWO SIGNIFICANT FLAWS.</p>
	<p>THE PRODUCT HAS SOME VALUE, BUT IT ALSO HAS SOME SERIOUS FLAWS; BUYER BEWARE.</p>
	<p>WE ARE INCLUDING THE PRODUCT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT.</p>
<p>THE PRODUCT HAS NO REDEEMING VALUE – AT LEAST, NONE THAT WDJ CAN APPRECIATE.</p>	