

Ann Arbor News “Your World” Submission for 8.28.06

As pet owners, we dread the day our beloved companions get sick. Although veterinarians can help with diagnosis and initial treatment, it is often up to us to administer ongoing care. Many pet owners are required to give their sick pets daily injections. Because treatment may go on for months, even for the rest of a pet’s life, it is important to know where to take used needles (sharps).

It is dangerous to dispose of sharps in your household trash. Inside a trash bag, loose sharps can injure family members or trash collectors. Once in the refuse truck, sharps containers are likely to break open from the pressure of trash compactors. Many workers then run the risk of sharps contact on sorting floors and in landfill operations.

In addition, whether or not your pet is being treated for an infectious disease, the person who has come in contact with an exposed needle may not know this. This uncertainty may result in stress or panic attacks and expensive blood tests.

So how do you dispose of used sharps responsibly?

- Purchase a sharps container from your local pharmacy. They cost a few dollars and hold anywhere from 30 to 300 used sharps, depending on the container size you select. These containers are puncture resistant with a special opening to accept sharps.
- Seal and tape the container when it is full.
- Bring your container to a local pharmacy that participates in a sharps take-back program (visit <http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org> for a listing). Although most of these pharmacies will only accept used sharps in the containers described above, they will dispose of them free of charge and in compliance with medical waste guidelines.

Another option is to seal your sharps in a sharps container or other puncture-resistant heavy gauge plastic container, such as a detergent or vinegar jug, and bring them to the Washtenaw County Home Toxics Collection Site. Located on 705 N. Zeeb Road, the site is open every Saturday from 9am-Noon. Although this service is free for all County residents, donations are accepted and appreciated. Please call 734-222-3950 for more information.

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