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Cat owners in VWRM jurisdiction encouraged to put kitty litter in green compost bin

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KENTVILLE, NS - When cleaning up after feline friends, cat owners living in areas served by Valley Waste Resource Management (VWRM) now have the option of putting used kitty litter in the green compost bin.

VWRM communications manager Andrew Garrett said it's optional but the waste authority began allowing kitty litter in the green compost bin as of Jan. 1. The used litter can be put in a

paper bag or box first or thrown into the green bin loose. The initiative represents an opportunity to divert more material, as landfilling is viewed as a last resort.

“We didn’t want to make a rule that you have to put all of your cat litter in the green cart but we encourage it,” Garrett said. “We’d much rather compost as much as we can rather than landfill.”

He said they’ve been composting kitty litter in Colchester County for approximately a decade and Pictou County began doing so last year. Garrett said there have been studies and, from a composting standpoint, there’s no problem with the practice.

He said there is a bit of a “yuck factor” involved, so that’s why the waste authority wanted to make it optional. People can still put used kitty litter in the garbage if they prefer.

Garrett said that when you consider the vast amount of various materials being composted, the little bit of clay from kitty litter won’t impact the process. He said processes followed at composting plants kill pathogens so the feces aren’t a concern in that regard.

“Theoretically, we could do dog feces, we just don’t want to go there yet. We want to kind of see how this works with the cats,” Garrett said.

He said their biggest concern with dog feces is that a lot of the time, people use plastic bags to pick it up. Plastics can’t go in the green cart. Even if the plastic bags are supposed to be biodegradable or compostable, if there are knots in them, for example, they won’t break down. Garrett said there is also more of a “yuck factor” with dog feces, as it’s not absorbed or encased by litter and could cause more odour issues.

Landfills are very expensive, use a lot of space and “they never go away.” Taking kitty litter out of landfills moves the material up on the so-called “waste hierarchy”, turning it into a resource as compost opposed to a disposal item. Composting kitty litter will significantly reduce the weight and volume of garbage going into landfills.

“Why fill a landfill with cat litter?” Garrett said. “It doesn’t make sense.”

Garrett said it’s also easier for people to dump the material into the green bin and wheel it to roadside rather than having to carry heavy bags of kitty litter.

He said VWRM published notice of the initiative in its annual calendar and on its