

Hobe Sound resident's invention will catch it before it hits the ground

By Jonathan Mattise

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HOBE SOUND — Governors Landing resident Bob Plotkin has turned one pooch's droppings into another man's treasure.

Or, at least, he might make a pretty penny helping dog lovers clean up that waste a little easier.

Plotkin's patented Poop Hoop invention, an aluminum handle attached to a plastic ring with a plastic food storage bag for catching the dog's droppings, has taken his gated neighborhood by storm. Plotkin's first 100 Hoops ordered have already almost sold out and, so far, his "catch it before it hits the ground" contraption has been a huge hit.

"The real trick is to show people how it works," Plotkin said. "It seems like it works on 99.5 percent of dogs I've used it on, and I spent two years testing it with neighbors."

About two years ago, Plotkin, 67, got tired of bending down to clean up after his 12-year-old yellow lab Kramer on walks. He started scouring pet shops for something that would catch his dog's droppings before they ended up in the grass, on the sidewalk or anywhere else that would make a mess — and a particularly nasty one, if what came out wasn't solid, he said.

When he couldn't find one, the carpet business veteran went to the drawing board to make it himself.

The result was his original Poop Hoop device, which he would stick right under Kramer's rear just before he did his business. Kramer had some concerns about having a foreign object hovering in a sensitive area, but after three walks Kramer didn't even acknowledge it was there, and not a trace of doo-doo was left behind, Plotkin said.

Plotkin's unique fecal receptacle got some interesting looks from neighbors his first few times out, but when they saw it in action, the dog-walking community in Governors Landing became believers.

Neighbors started asking where they could buy extra Hoops for their friends, and Plotkin realized his product had a pretty marketable niche.

He contacted a patent attorney, worked with a Clearwater company for manufacturing and set up a website to sell his invention for \$19.95, plus shipping and handling.

The key, Plotkin said, is having the Hoop in the right place, at the right time.

"You can tell when dogs are getting ready," Plotkin said. "They'll usually start circling or something. Once they assume that position, nothing will stop them."

Poop Hoop

What it is: A 4-inch wide plastic hoop attached to an 18-inch aluminum handle with a rubber grip that can extend out about 15 more inches. The knuckle joint that attaches the hoop to the handle allows you to adjust the hoop's angle to the ground. And a lanyard is attached to hang up the product in a closet.

How it works: Insert a plastic food storage bag into the plastic hoop and place the plastic ring over the hoop to hold the bag. Wait until the moment before the dog starts to poop, and slip the hoop underneath to catch the dog's waste before it hits the ground. Dispose of the bag and replace it for future use.

Where to find it: www.poophoop.com; \$19.95 plus shipping and handling, Federal Animal Hospital in Hobe Sound, Precious Puppy of Jupiter and Roxy Doxie Designs at the B & A Flea Market in Stuart are also dealers.

More information: Call Bob Plotkin at (772) 546-9200.



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