Dear Dog-Owners of Brooklyn,

Please don’t get me wrong. I think dogs are adorable fuzzy bundles of joy. That being said, when you walk them and leave behind not-so-adorable bundles, it is irresponsible and, quite frankly, disgusting. There are signs on nearly every block of my neighborhood (and, I’m sure, most neighborhoods in Brooklyn) that say “Curb your Dog,” “Clean up after your Dog,” or something to that effect. There are usually fines posted for failing to do so, and as you are probably aware, they are rarely enforced. That is why I have to rely on a dog owner to obey the law and clean up after their dog.

Some people imagine that when they leave their dog droppings behind, it isn’t such a big deal. It’s a lump on the sidewalk. Someone can sidestep or walk over it. And really, if someone steps in it, it’s their own fault for not paying attention to the sidewalk in front of them, and even then, they can simply clean their shoes off later.

Now consider someone in a wheelchair. I know, you don’t see too many of us, but we exist, and we use the same sidewalks that you do. Imagine dog droppings on a sidewalk, and imagine someone in a wheelchair coming down the block. They can’t get around the poop. It’s in the middle of the sidewalk, and thanks to some absent-minded walker, it is now all over the sidewalk (the absent-minded walker thought he or she could scrape the feces off on the sidewalk). What’s the nearest available option? Wheel into the street? Go all the way down the block, cross the street, and take our chances with the other side of the sidewalk?

Also consider a scenario where the person in the wheelchair doesn’t see the dog poop. Let’s say it’s autumn, and a bunch of leaves were covering it. Suddenly, it’s on their wheel. This is a problem. The person in the wheelchair is now stranded. Please know that when wheeling a chair, your hands are pushing the chair by the tires. Meaning that your dog’s crap will end up on the hands of the person wheeling the chair. As if people in wheelchairs don’t have enough to deal with simply by being handicapped. Now, the person who left their home to meet a friend for coffee has to wheel back, scrub and disinfect their tires, and then wash their hands at least ten times before calling their friend to say they’ll have to postpone coffee for a bit because they had a run-in with an irresponsible dog owner’s mess.

I love Bay Ridge, but I hate the amount of dog feces I have to dodge on a regular basis. I’ve been using a wheelchair for nearly five years now, and it wasn’t until I was forced to wheel myself around that I noticed just how many people do not clean up after their dogs, whether by laziness, forgetfulness, or sheer stupidity. I’ve left my house with my family to go out for breakfast, only to have the morning be completely spoiled by getting dog droppings on my tires that should have been cleaned up.

I have nothing against your dogs. I’m sure they’re lovely. But to walk them and not clean up after them is irresponsible, inconsiderate, and disrespectful to those of us who have to, in effect, touch everything that goes on the ground. Please take a minute out of your time and clean up after your dog. Your neighbors will appreciate it.