

# CARCASS DISPOSAL BIOSECURITY TIP SHEET



Farms and ranches lose animals due to disease. Dead animals should be disposed of promptly to prevent exposure to live animals. Carcass disposal options may include burial, burning, composting, landfill, or rendering. Local and state rules on carcass disposal must be followed.

Animals that have to be killed for humane reasons, sickness, or a contagious disease may need different disposal options. Sick or injured animals should be killed humanely and quickly if they are unlikely to recover. Some drugs used to kill animals could contaminate the environment or poison scavenger animals. Plan a few disposal options to protect the health of your animals and wildlife.

## KNOW THE OPTIONS

Contact the agency that oversees carcass disposal in your area. The method will depend on:

- Animal species
- Number of animals
- Environmental impacts – nearby water, air quality, soil use
- Site selection
- Disease(s) of concern

## PLAN AHEAD

Have a plan for safe handling and disposal of carcasses. Train all personnel on the carcass management plan.

Carcass disposal is controlled by state and local laws. Work with your veterinarian on a plan that meets legal requirements and works best for your operation. Include these items in your plan:

- Where carcasses can be stored on-site depending on disposal options.
  - Short-term storage may include:
    - Covering them with a tarp
    - Moving them to an area away from other animals
    - Enclosures
    - Cold storage
  - Long-term storage may include composting or burial.
- Contact information for a rendering company or the landfill.
- Different options for seasons (frozen ground, flooding, etc.).
- Different options for situations (killed with a drug, necropsy and cannot be picked up, a large number of animals die at once, etc.).
- Map of your farm/ranch with the carcass disposal/storage area(s) marked.
- Methods available to prevent wildlife, rodents, pets, and other scavengers from contacting carcasses and spreading disease or becoming ill.



A large number of carcasses can be placed in this enclosure until pickup by a rendering service.  
*Source: Danelle Bickett-Weddle, Iowa State University*



Carcasses in a shallow burial pit away from other animals.  
*Source: Brian VanderLey, Iowa State University*

## CARCASS HANDLING EQUIPMENT

Caution must be taken with vehicles and equipment used for handling dead animals to prevent disease spread.

- Equipment used to handle carcasses or compost should not be used to handle feed unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.
- Carcass pick up should happen at the edge of your property line. Rendering trucks and other vehicles hauling dead animals often travel to many other sites. They can easily become contaminated with diseases. It is best to prevent these vehicles from entering your operation.
- If using your own vehicle or equipment to haul dead animals to a disposal site, clean and disinfect after use. This will help prevent cross-contamination to other areas of your farm/ranch.



A skid loader is used to cover carcasses in a compost pile.  
Source: Richard Ehrhardt, Michigan State University Extension

## ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist to determine areas where you are doing well and others that need improvement.

YES	NO	After answering, pick one or two “No” answers and make an improvement plan with the resources below.
		Do you know the approved options to dispose of carcasses in your area?
		Are rendering trucks and other vehicles hauling dead animals to a common disposal site prevented from entering your property?
		Are dead animals disposed of in a manner that prevents the attraction of wildlife, pets, rodents, and other scavengers?

## MORE RESOURCES

For more information, please access the following resources:

[Carcass Disposal Overview](#). Center for Food Security and Public Health, Iowa State University.

[Carcass Management Dashboard – USDA](#). U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[Mortality Management – Healthy Farms Healthy Agriculture](#). Healthy Farms Healthy Agriculture.

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