

This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document.

Disposal of Animal Carcasses

Numerous animal deaths may result from environmental factors that include floods, storms, heat and cold, or drought conditions. Deaths may result from biological events including chronic wasting disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, foot and mouth disease, anthrax, etc. Deaths may also be attributed to chemical or toxic agents. It may even be necessary to destroy diseased or potentially diseased animals. If animal deaths result from biological events, a licensed veterinarian should be contacted for an evaluation of the mortalities.

If carcasses are managed as the result of an emergency with the potential to impact immediate or long term animal or public health and safety, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA), the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) and local emergency management authorities should be contacted.

Livestock producers are encouraged to develop their own routine and emergency disposal plans. Statewide planning documents (e.g. the "Catastrophic Animal Mortality Management Plan or CAMMP") have been developed to assist planners and emergency managers. For more information, contact NDEQ or NDA.

Disposal Methods:

On-Site Burial – When done in compliance with state and local regulations, burial is an accepted method of disposing of animals and is often the disposal method of choice for catastrophic livestock losses. Burying the animals on site within thirty-six hours after knowledge of death and at least four feet below the surface of the ground dramatically lowers the possibility of spreading a disease.

A state permit to bury on-site or on an adjacent property is not required; nevertheless, there are obligations under rule and statute to protect ground water resources. With this in mind, it is recommended that a disposal site be selected with knowledge of the environmental conditions, including: land topography, depth to groundwater, surface water drainage, as well as soil type and depth. Also, separation distances to neighbors, surface water bodies, wells, roads and rights of way should be considered.

Recommended Separation Distances for Burial Sites:

- 5 feet separation from the bottom of the burial pit to ground water;
- 4 feet of compacted cover soil;

- 1000 feet from public water supply wells, 500 feet from domestic wells and outside of any well-head protection areas;
- 300 feet from domestic water intakes, streams, creeks, ponds, springs and lakes and at least 100 feet from the edge of a major cut or embankment;
- 500 feet from residences, livestock facilities and adjacent pastures owned or leased by another person;
- 300 feet from a road;
- 500 feet from a secondary highway; and
- 1000 feet from a primary highway.

On-Site Incineration – Disposal by burning requires the use of an incinerator permitted by the NDEQ. In most circumstances, incineration is a difficult disposal method to employ quickly with large numbers of livestock carcasses. Other methods, such as open burning with an Air Curtain Incinerator, would normally not be allowed; however, during an emergency such methods may be approved by the NDEQ on a case-by-case basis. The NDEQ Air Quality Division must be contacted if any incineration or burning is under consideration.

On-Site Composting – Composting of livestock mortalities is an approved method of disposal. However, for this method of disposal to be successful, proper equipment, material and management are required. Please contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture if this method of carcass disposal is to be used.

Rendering Service – Contact a licensed rendering service for the proper transportation and disposal of dead animals.

NOTE: *Nebraska Statue §54-744 limits disposal to burial, incineration, composting, rendering or landfilling.* Burial, incineration and composting must be performed on-site or on an adjacent property. Restrictions apply. Questions concerning these statutory requirements should be directed to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. If alternate disposal methods are necessary due to an emergency, contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture or the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality for more information.*

**Veterinary clinics and laboratories have other options.*

Alternate Disposal Methods:

Off-Site Burial – Animal disposal in pits or trenches **not** on-site or on an adjacent property may be appropriate in emergency situations if authorized under the **Nebraska Emergency Management Act**.

Landfill Disposal – Dead animals may be disposed at any of the permitted municipal solid waste landfills in Nebraska. Due to the potential for individual facility restrictions, arrangements should be made with the landfill prior to transport by a licensed rendering service.

RESOURCES:

- NDEQ Home Page <http://deq.ne.gov/>

Contacts:

- NDEQ Waste Management Section (402) 471-4210
- NDEQ Toll Free Number (877) 253-2603
- NDEQ Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistant (402) 471-8308

- Email questions to: NDEQ.moreinfo@nebraska.gov

NDEQ Publications:

- NDEQ Guidance Document – [Natural Disaster Debris Management](#)
Guidance is available on the NDEQ Home Page under “Publications & Forms”
- [Title 132 – Integrated Solid Waste Management Regulations](#)
Titles are available on the NDEQ Home Page under “Laws/Regs & EQC”, “Rules & Regulations”