

FARM PRACTICE

MORTALITY DISPOSAL

Description

Mortalities occur on livestock and poultry operations. The numbers of mortalities and the amount of material to dispose of is usually small. In the case of a severe disease outbreak or equipment failure, however, the numbers and amount can be substantial, possibly requiring additional emergency services.

Nuisance Concerns

The three primary disturbances mentioned in the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* are odour, noise and dust. Of particular potential concern to mortality disposal practices is odour.

Odour

Odour is the human perception of and response to chemicals in the air. The degree to which individuals perceive an odour to be a nuisance will depend on the frequency, intensity, duration and offensiveness of the odour. Other factors that come into play include a person's sensitivities and personal previous experiences.

Farmers engage in a variety of activities that produce odours. Some mortality disposal practices will generate some odour.

See also Nuisance Reference: [Odour](#)

Activities and Operations

Mortality Removal

Mortalities should be separated from live animal areas as soon as possible after death to protect the health of other livestock and poultry and to prevent rodent and insect problems.

Mortality Disposal

Mortalities must be disposed of on the farm where they died unless removed by a dead stock pickup service provider who will transport the mortalities to a suitable intermediate authorized site for further transportation or disposal. If the ambient temperature is above freezing, mortalities should be disposed of before decomposition sets in. If temperatures are below freezing, a lesser urgency presents itself before carcasses must be removed. Regardless, mortalities should be stored in suitable containers before removal.

In areas served by disposal companies, farm pickup service is available and is the most efficient method of disposal.

In areas not serviced by disposal companies, mortalities can be composted, incinerated or buried. Mortality compost must be actively managed for appropriate composting conditions, including sufficient bulking material such as wood chips or straw for mixing and cover. Mortality incineration must comply with emission limits stipulated in the *Agricultural Waste Control Regulation*. Buried mortalities must not contaminate ground water, water courses or water supplies and must be buried to depths which prevent predators from digging them up. If the ground is frozen and burial is not possible, mortalities may be stored until such time that the ground thaws. In such cases, mortalities should be stored in bins or steel containers in order to prevent access by other livestock, poultry or predators.

See also Farm Practice: [Pest Management](#)

Mortality Processing

Processing mortalities by physical, chemical or biological treatment for resource recovery is preferable to burial if processing can be done within reasonable timelines and according to suggested guidelines.

See also Farm Practice: [Composting](#)

In 2007 new federal regulations were enacted to govern the management of specified risk materials (SRM). SRM is specific to cattle tissue and is defined as the skull, brain, trigeminal ganglia, eyes, tonsils, spinal cord and dorsal root ganglia of cattle aged 30 months or older. SRM also includes part of the small intestine known as the distal ileum for cattle of all ages. Disposal of cattle carcasses on the farm where they died is not affected by federal SRM regulations, but transportation and disposal of whole cattle carcasses or SRM removed from carcasses to a site away from the farm of origin requires special federal permits. These permits are required under the *Health of Animals Regulation*.

Legislation

Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C. Acts, regulations and bylaws that regulate or may affect mortality disposal include, but are not limited to, the following.

Federal Legislation

The *Health of Animals Act* provides the regulatory framework for management of animals and their products. The *Health of Animals Regulations* under this Act stipulate that a permit is required for the transportation and disposal of specified risk material (SRM) from the farm of origin.

Provincial Legislation

The *Environmental Management Act* protects the soil, water and air environments from pollution. The *Agricultural Waste Control Regulation* under this Act allows a farmer to operate without a waste permit when storing and using mortalities according to the *Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management*.

The *Health Act* regulates farm practices that may result in a health hazard to humans.

The *Wildlife Act* prohibits the feeding of livestock or poultry carcasses to dangerous wildlife unless done so for hunting or trapping purposes in accordance with all applicable provisions of the Act.

Publications

Publications that provide information on the disposal of mortalities include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

British Columbia Agricultural Composting Handbook

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Composting Option, South Coastal Region of BC

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Burial Option, South Coastal Region of BC