

FARM PRACTICE

WOODWASTE

Description

Woodwaste, as defined in the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation, includes hog fuel, mill ends, wood chips, bark and sawdust. It does not include demolition waste, construction waste, tree stumps, branches, logs or log ends.

Woodwaste is used on BC farms for a variety of purposes, including those listed below:

- On-farm access ways
- Ground cover
- Confinement and exercise yards
- Plant mulch
- Soil conditioner
- Bedding
- Berms for cranberry production
- Fuel for wood-fired boilers

Woodwaste is a natural product. However, if rainwater or surface water seeps into woodwaste it can result in the formation of leachate that may cause pollution. Woodwaste leachate can enter into surface water and groundwater supplies. Consequently, precautions must be taken to ensure that leaching does not occur.

Activities and Operations

Woodwaste Storage

Stored woodwaste should be covered to prevent leachate from forming and potentially degrading the environment. Woodwaste should not be stored for more than two years before being used on the farm operation.

Woodwaste Use

Only woodwaste uses that minimize leachate and prevent water contamination are permitted. All Woodwaste uses include the following common environmental requirements:

- Woodwaste must not be used as landfill unless a permit or approval has been obtained from Ministry of Environment.
- When woodwaste is used as a mulch, groundcover, or soil conditioner, woodwaste deposits must not exceed a total depth of 30 cm, which should be achieved by applying layers that do not exceed 15 cm per year. The volume and manner in which woodwastes are applied must follow good agronomic practices for the soil type, climatic area and crop to be grown.

- A buffer zone of 30 meters is required between domestic water supplies or other sensitive water bodies and any woodwaste storage sites or wood wastes use sites where the wood is not incorporated into the soil.
- Woodwaste and woodwaste leachate must not be allowed to contaminate surface or groundwater.

Removal of Soil or Placement of Fill

Woodwaste is captured under the definition of fill in the ALC Act.

As necessary, soil removal or placement of fill is a permitted agricultural activity. For specified farm and non-farm uses, including the construction and maintenance of greenhouses, farm building or structure for use in an intensive livestock operation or for mushroom production, an aquaculture facility, or a composting facility, with conditions, and where the removal of soil or placement of fill exceeds 2% of the area of the parcel, a ‘Notice of Intent’ must be submitted to the Agricultural Land Commission. Proposals under the ‘Notice of Intent’ may be allowed with terms and conditions set by the CEO of the Commission or require an approval of the Commission.

Related Farm Practices

Other farm practices that pertain to woodwaste include, but are not limited to, the following:

Compost

Woodwaste is often used as a carbon source in compost.

Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners

Woodwaste could be used as a soil conditioner.

Legislation

The *Agricultural Waste Control Regulation* and the *Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management*, under the Environmental Management Act, states that woodwaste stored and used on the farm must be handled to prevent any escape of a) particulate or solid matter from the woodwaste into the air, or b) particulate or solid matter or leachate from the woodwaste into any natural watercourse or ground water that causes pollution. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C. Other acts, regulations and bylaws that regulate or may affect woodwaste use practices include, but are not limited to, the following:

Federal

Fisheries Act – protects fish and fish habitat from deleterious substances, including woodwaste leachate.

Local Government

Applicable *Woodwaste Storage and Use Bylaws*

Publications

Publications that provide further information on woodwaste use include, but are not limited to, the following (refer to Appendix D for details):

B.C. Agricultural Drainage Manual

Canada - British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

Guidelines for Farm Practices Involving Fill

*Guidelines to Prevent Damage to Fish and Fish Habitat from the Use,
Transportation, Storage and Disposal of Woodwaste in British Columbia*

*Mitigation of Fisheries Impacts from the Use and Disposal of Wood Residue in
British Columbia and the Yukon*

Waste Management Guidelines for Classification of Woodwaste Discharges