

## **Biosecurity Basics: Carcass Management and Disposal**

Biosecurity on the farm is essential for keeping your animals healthy and starts with a few key steps. This presentation will address one of these biosecurity basics for small-scale producers – carcass management and disposal.

Good carcass management and disposal will prevent the spread of disease to other animals in your herd or flock. It is important to know the allowed disposal options for your state, and make plans for handling animal carcasses, including the necessary cleaning and disinfection procedures for equipment or vehicles used during the process. A printable PDF containing the tips presented here is available for free download on the CFSPH website.

Most farms and ranches will lose animals to disease. Animals may require euthanasia for humane reasons, sickness, or a contagious disease. Dead animals should be disposed of promptly to prevent disease exposure to other animals in the herd or flock.

Carcass disposal options may include burial, composting, burning, rendering or landfills. Local and state rules and regulations determine which are allowed and must be followed.

Contact the agency that oversees carcass disposal in your area. This may be the Department of Agriculture or Animal Health, or the Department of Natural Resources.

The carcass disposal method selected will depend on a number of factors.

The first consideration is the animal species involved and the number of animals to be disposed. These parameters will determine the overall quantity for disposal, and the amount of space and/or equipment that will be needed.

Another consideration is the cause of death. In cases involving infectious diseases, the pathogen(s) of concern and its ability to persist in the environment or spread to additional locations may determine the disposal method that can be used.

Equally important is the site location, time of year, environmental characteristics (e.g., soil type, slope, porosity) or environmental concerns (e.g., potential for runoff to nearby water sources or ground water contamination, or air quality impacts), as well as applicable regulations.

Have a plan for safe handling, transporting, and disposing of carcasses. Avoid contamination to other areas of the farm. Work with your veterinarian on a plan that meets legal requirements and works best for your operation.

Determine 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.

Ensure the method used prevents wildlife, rodents, pets, and other scavengers from contacting carcasses and spreading disease or becoming ill.

Have contact information for a rendering company or the landfill, as well as different options for varying seasons (frozen ground, flooding, etc.), for situations, such as when animals have been chemically euthanized, or times when animals cannot be picked up right away or a large number of animals die at once.

Train any farm personnel on the carcass management plan.

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.

Use a map of your farm/ranch to determine carcass disposal/storage and pickup locations.

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

If using your own vehicle or equipment to haul dead animals to a disposal site, clean and disinfect after use, and these items should not be used to haul feed.

This will help prevent cross-contamination to other areas or animals on your farm/ranch.

Using the following assessment checklist, determine areas where you are already doing well and others that may need to improve.

*[Read the questions]*

After answering, pick one or two “No” answers and make an improvement plan for your farm.

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