Landowner’s Guide to Managing Livestock Mortality

BURIAL

Requirements:

Burial must protect surface water and groundwater. The bottom of the burial hole must be dry.

Burial is regulated by the Oregon Department of Agriculture’s (ODA) Water Quality Program under Oregon Revised Statue (ORS) 468B.025: “... no person shall: (a) Cause pollution of any waters of the state or place or cause to be placed any wastes in a location where such wastes are likely to escape or be carried into the waters of the state by any means.”

In some cases, burial can also be regulated by Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) because carcasses are considered solid waste (ORS 459.005). Burial is illegal for disposal of commercial butcher waste.

Burying more than 4,200 pounds requires a Catastrophic Animal Mortality Management Plan (CAMMP) approved by ODA or a solid waste permit approved by DEQ (ORS 459.205). The state veterinarian also oversees implementation of a CAMMP in the event of a reportable livestock disease outbreak. Burial of many carcasses on permitted Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) requires both a CAMMP and a description in the ODA-approved Animal Waste Management Plan (AWMP). If carcasses are brought to your farm from other locations, you may be subject to additional regulations from ODA, DEQ, or your local land-use planning agency.

Recommendations:

- Do not bury carcasses in areas with saturated soil, ponded water, seasonal flooding, or floodplains.

- Bury carcasses at least 500 feet from surface waters or wells; they can be closer if downhill of wells or if soils have high clay content below the top soil. In all cases, a minimum of 100 feet from wells and surface water is recommended.

  - To avoid complaints from neighbors, bury carcasses:

    1) More than 300 feet from any nearby residence that is not owned by the owner of the property where the burial is to take place, and

    2) More than 50 feet from any property line between parcels under different ownership.

- Burial should be on relatively flat land with a slope of less than 2 percent.
2. Other livestock operations composting mortalities:
   » Generated by their operation, and
   » In amounts not to exceed 20 tons/year of mortality and 100 tons/year of crop/vegetative residue or manure. This exemption is maintained as long as the composting activity does not impair surface water or groundwater or create nuisances for neighbors.

Recommendations:
The On-Farm Composting Handbook issued by Cornell University is available online.

NATURAL DISPOSAL

On a large, rural farm or ranch, it may be appropriate to leave the carcasses on the ground for scavengers.

Requirements:
- You must place the carcass at least 1/2-mile from any dwelling and at least 1/4-mile from any open waterway (ORS 601.140).
- Natural disposal is illegal for commercial butcher waste (ORS 459.005, 459.205).
- It is illegal to leave carcasses on public lands (43 CFR 8365.1-1).

Recommendations:
- Do not naturally dispose of chemically euthanized animals to prevent harm to predators.
- Do not dispose of multiple carcasses by natural disposal at one time or in one location.

COMPOSTING

Composting dead animals and byproducts allows you to recycle the nutrients in the carcasses and, if done properly, is a sound environmental practice.

Requirements:
Livestock operations composting mortalities or slaughter/butcher waste need to apply for a composting permit from DEQ (ORS 459.205) and operate in compliance with that permit, except for the following exceptions:
1. Permitted CAFOs must describe composting activities in an ODA-approved Nutrient Management Plan. ODA oversees mortality composting on all permitted CAFOs.

LANDFILL

Certain landfills are allowed to take carcasses and butchering waste. Call your local landfill to find out if it can accept animal carcasses or see ODA’s list at https://oda.direct/AnimalCarcassesLandfills. If the landfill does not, DEQ may grant an exception to allow the landfill to accept the carcass(es).

When hauling dead livestock to the landfill, Oregon law requires that the carcasses be covered (ORS 601.100(3)). If you need to use a hauling service, see the list of haulers licensed in Oregon at https://oda.direct/AnimalDisposalHaulers. If you have a high number of mortalities and are unable to make disposal arrangements with your local landfill or hauling service, contact ODA at 503.986.4550.
OPEN BURNING
Animal carcasses and byproducts cannot be openly burned (Oregon Administrative Rules 340-264-0060).

INCINERATION/OTHER METHODS
Animal mortalities and byproducts can be incinerated in an incinerator or cremation unit operating with an approved DEQ Air Quality Permit. However, this option is not commonly available and may be expensive.

Anaerobic Digestion or other Controlled Chemical Decomposition
Animal mortalities can be processed with anaerobic digestion and other chemical decomposition methods. These options require considerable infrastructure and operational permitting from DEQ or from ODA in the case of permitted CAFOs. Contact DEQ or ODA to pursue these options.

MORTALITY MANAGEMENT FOR OPERATIONS WITH CAFO PERMITS
Permitted CAFOs need to follow their specific AWMP. If they are unable to follow the AWMP, they need to contact their ODA inspector to work on modifying the AWMP to include additional methods for mortality management/disposal. In most cases, ODA should be able to amend the mortality management section of an AWMP via a phone conversation with the permittee.

Oregon Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Program Area – Salem
Online: https://oda.direct/AboutNR
Water Quality: 503.986.4700
CAFO: 503.986.4699

Animal Health Program – Salem
Online: https://oda.direct/AboutAHID
503.986.4680

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Online: https://oda.fyi/composting, https://oda.fyi/DisposalPermits

Eastern Region: 541.298.7255, Ext. 221
Counties: Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla (including Milton-Freewater), Union, Wallowa, Wasco, and Wheeler

Northwest Region: 503.229.5263
Counties: Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Tillamook, and Washington

Western Region: 541.687.7465
Counties: Benton, Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill