Carcass Disposal

Proper disposal of dead animals on a farm is important to protect public health and safety. Improper disposal creates a nuisance, spreads disease, and contaminates water. State environmental quality and animal health regulatory agencies enforce regulations and publish guidelines for safe carcass disposal procedures. Farm owners are responsible for proper disposal of their dead animals. State regulatory agencies may pose fines for violating animal carcass handling and disposal laws.

Methods of carcass disposal include burning, burial, or composting carcasses on site and hauling to a waste burial landfill, waste burning incinerator, or rendering plant. Burning must take place in areas where they do not create a nuisance, traffic hazard, or wildfire risk. Animals can not be buried in areas with highly permeable soils, high water levels, or within a 100-year floodplain. Sandy soils may not be suitable without first lining the burial pit. There can be no discharge from the burial site into or adjacent to ground waters. Minimal distances are required for burial sites from drinking water wells, surface waters, and neighbors. The right soil, the right site, and the right cover are necessary for safe burial of carcasses. Proper burial cover requires at least 2 feet of soil. Assistance for identifying burial sites in the event of a major die-off is provided by local soil conservation district offices. Instructions on how to bury carcasses can be obtained from environmental quality district offices.
State Regulations

The state environmental quality control agency must be notified in writing prior to burial of animal carcasses on a farm. Written notification must include animal type, number, and burial site. In cases involving more than 10 dead animals, additional requirements such as deed recordation will be presented to the owner. A veterinarian may dispose of the remains of a client’s animal by burial or burning if the burial or burning occurs on property owned by the veterinarian. The property must be located outside the city limits, unless it is the result of annexation.

State laws specifically prohibit the disposal of carcasses in the open, because decomposing carcasses may expose other animals to disease and contaminate ground water. The odor from decomposing carcasses may also create a public nuisance. In some instances natural decomposition may be the only option and may be acceptable if carcasses are not a nuisance to the public or an environmental hazard. Burial or burning are required within 24 hours for animals that have died of a communicable disease. Burning diseased animal carcass is the most effective means of controlling the spread of disease.

References


Questions

1. Why is the disposal of carcasses regulated?
2. Who is responsible for making sure animal carcasses are disposed of properly?
3. How soon must diseased animals be disposed of after death?
4. How can farmers dispose of livestock and poultry carcasses?
5. Where can farmers bury livestock and poultry carcasses?
6. Where can farmers burn livestock and poultry carcasses?
7. Why can’t dead livestock and poultry be left for wild animals?