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Disposal of Domestic or Exotic Livestock Carcasses

RG-419, PDF version
(revised 3/05)

This document is a summary of suggested guidelines from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) for disposal of farm or ranch animals.

This document does not explain requirements that apply to veterinarians or commercial chicken or duck operations. For information about chicken or duck carcass disposal, see TCEQ publication RG-326, How to Dispose of Carcasses from Commercial Chicken or Duck Operations.

For rules that apply to veterinarians disposing of carcasses, refer to Title 30 Texas Administrative Code (30 TAC) Section 111.209(3).

By planning in advance how you will dispose of carcasses, your facility will be better prepared to deal with environmental and health issues. Emergency cases may be handled differently. Contact your regional TCEQ office in the event of an emergency.

Why is disposal of carcasses regulated?

On-farm disposal of dead animals should always be done in a manner that protects public health and safety, does not create a nuisance, prevents the spread of disease, and prevents adverse effects on water quality.

Who is responsible for making sure the carcasses are properly disposed of?

The owner or operator of the farm or facility is responsible for disposal in a timely and sanitary manner. Please be aware that under 30 TAC Section 335.4 this means there can be no discharge into or adjacent to waters in the state. There can be no creation or maintenance of a nuisance and there can be no endangerment of public health and welfare.

How soon must they be disposed of?

TAHC rules require that animals that die from a disease recognized as communicable by the veterinary profession must be disposed of within 24 hours by burial or burning. Animals dying from anthrax or ornithosis must be killed, then burned on-site within 24 hours.

How can I dispose of the carcasses?

There are several options including on-site burial, composting, or sending the carcass to a municipal solid waste landfill, renderer, or commercial waste incinerator. TCEQ rules allow animals to be burned when burning is the most effective means to control the spread of a communicable disease. The animal must be burned until the carcass is thoroughly consumed. The cover requirements described in 30 TAC Chapter 330, Section 136(b)(2) should be adequate for burial of farm and ranch animals in most cases. Some diseases are reportable, and you are required to contact the TAHC at 1-800-550-8242 prior to disposing of animals with these diseases. TAHC can also provide a list of reportable animal diseases.

Where can I bury?

If you decide to bury the animal, the burial site should not be located in an area with a high water table or with very permeable soils. The TCEQ suggests that animals be buried far enough from standing, flowing, or ground water to prevent contamination of these waters, and in an area not likely to be disturbed in the near future.

Suggested Setbacks for Burial

- Drinking water wells - At least 300 feet from the nearest drinking water well.
- Surface water - At least 300 feet from the nearest creek, stream, pond, lake, or river, and not in a floodplain.
- Neighbors - At least 200 feet from adjacent property lines.

Where can I burn?

When burning, do not do so in an area where a nuisance or traffic hazard would be created.

Suggested TCEQ Setbacks for Burning

- Adjacent properties - Downwind of, or at least 300 feet (90 meters) from, occupied structures.
- Weather conditions - If possible, burn during the day when the wind speed is > 6 mph or < 23 mph. Monitor the fire, and complete the burn the same day.

Notification Requirements

Notify the TCEQ by letter if you expect to bury animal carcasses on your farm. Your letter should contain your full

name and address, the type of animals, and a short description of the locations on your farm where the carcasses will be buried. Information on the anticipated capacity of the burial areas as well as the use of daily and/or final cover should be included, and a map showing the general location of the area would be useful. This letter will be considered as your compliance with 30 TAC Section 335.6 and will be acknowledged by the TCEQ. Mail your notification to the address listed under the “Additional Information” section of this document.

Once you notify us, do not send additional letters. However, if you have more than 10 animals die at one time, it is recommended that you contact the TCEQ regional office near you since multiple mortalities are handled on a case-by-case basis. If the location of burial changes, or if additional burial areas are used, then an updated Section 335.6 notification should be provided.

Disclaimer

This document is intended as guidance to identify the requirements for the disposal of animal carcasses; it does not supersede or replace any state or federal law, regulation, or rule. It is the responsibility of the owner to be knowledgeable and to remain abreast of guideline or regulation developments. Please refer to the “Additional Information” and “Recommended References” sections for more specific information.

Additional Information

Rules regarding carcass disposal: Rules that are directly related to carcass disposal are in 30 TAC Chapters 335 and 111 including Sections 335.4 – 335.6, which deal with general waste disposal requirements, and 111.209(2) “Exception for Disposal Fires”

Rules for poultry disposal: 30 TAC Chapter 335—including Section 335.6, “Notification Requirements,” and especially Section 335.25, “Handling, Storing, Processing, Transporting, and Disposing of Poultry Carcasses”

Disposal rules that apply to veterinarians: 30 TAC Section 111.209(3)

Water quality rules for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs): 30 TAC Chapter 321, Subchapter B; For composting operations: 30 TAC Chapter 332; For municipal solid waste (landfills): 30 TAC Chapter 330

Nuisance Rules, General Rules: 30 TAC Chapter 101 Section 4 and CAFO Rules: 30 TAC Subchapter B Section 321.31

Public Health Rules: Sections 81.081-81.086 of the Texas Health and Safety Code

Texas Animal Health Commission: Texas Agriculture Code Chapters, 161 to 168. Contact: 1-800-550-8242 prior to

disposing of diseased animals. TAHC also can provide a list of reportable animal diseases.

Notification for onsite burial of carcasses: Industrial and Hazardous Waste Permits Section, MC-130, TCEQ, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087 ; Phone: 512/239-6595 Fax: 512/239-6383. It is recommended you contact your TCEQ Regional Office if you have more than 10 animals die at one time and you plan to dispose of them on-site.

TCEQ Rules: Rules and publications are available at www.tceq.state.tx.us or 512/239-0028

TAHC Rules: Rules and publications are available at www.tahc.state.tx.us

Recommended References

How to Dispose of Carcasses from Commercial Chicken or Duck Operations (TCEQ RG-326; April 2000) explains carcass disposal rules and options for anyone who hatches, raises, or keeps chickens or ducks for profit.

Catastrophic Animal Mortality Management (Burial Method), Technical Guidance, USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, February 11, 2002

NRCS TX Conservation Practice Standards: Code 316 - Animal Mortality Management

OSHA Construction rules: www.osha-slc.gov/OshStd_toc/OSHA_Std_toc_1926.html

OSHA Excavation Rules: www.osha-slc.gov/OshStd_toc/OSHA_Std_toc_1926_SUBPART_P.html

Title 2, Texas Water Code, Chapter 26, Subchapter H, Poultry Operations: www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/statutes.html

Senate Bill 1339, and House Bill 3355 (77th Legislature, 2001): www.lrl.state.tx.us/isaf/lrlhome.cfm

Texas Occupations Code, §801.361, Disposal of Animal Remains (78th Legislature, 2003): www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/oc.toc.htm

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Call 1-800-344-8377 to make sure you will not accidentally hit a gas or utility line on your property when digging a hole to bury animal carcasses.