

Dealing with Deadstock

Despite the fact that you continually work to improve animal health on your farm, some livestock deaths are inevitable. Regardless of whether the animal was euthanized or died, it is up to producers to handle deadstock in a way that protects people, other livestock, and wildlife on or near the farm. Ontario Regulation 106/09: Disposal of Dead Farm Animals under the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, requires farm owners or managers to follow specific laws when disposing of deadstock, including disposal via an approved method and keeping specific records.

Deadstock should be immediately removed from animal housing areas. Dispose of the carcass within 48 hours of the animal's death, or sooner if it begins to decay or rot. The carcass may be held longer, for up to 7 days, for post-mortem or insurance purposes, but needs to be stored out of view of the public, and in a way that will prevent any liquids from seeping into the ground or nearby water. Alternatively, deadstock can be stored in cold storage (up to 14 days) or frozen storage (up to 240 days). Prevent livestock, pets, and wildlife from accessing the carcass. This is especially important if chemicals such as barbiturates were used to euthanize the animal and helps to avoid attracting scavengers that can be a biosecurity risk to the farm.

Disposal options

When disposing of dead farm animals, there are several options available. Options include burying, incinerating, composting, depositing in a disposal vessel, using a licenced collector, using an approved anaerobic digester, delivering it to an approved waste disposal site, delivering it to an approved disposal facility, or delivering it to a licenced veterinarian (for post mortem and disposal by the veterinarian).

**Transportation of dead cattle
If transporting dead cattle,
contact the
Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
for conditions and requirements specific
to transporting dead cattle.
www.inspection.gc.ca
1-800-442-2342**

Deadstock collection

A licenced deadstock collector can pick up mortalities from the farm. The collector will likely charge a fee for this service. The deadstock collector should be contacted as soon as possible to arrange pick up. The carcass is typically processed into feed ingredients, animal byproducts such as hides/leather, tallow, or ash, or energy. Precautions must be taken to avoid transmitting disease between farms by the deadstock collectors.

A list of licenced deadstock collectors can be found here: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/ahw/deadstockoperators.htm>

On-farm burial

Burial is a useful disposal method, but is not practical in the winter when the ground freezes. Have an alternative disposal method to use when the ground is frozen. Selecting a burial site must follow specific guidelines regarding proximity to aquifers, bed rock, or other burial pits. The type, location, and size will vary based on the size, amount, and frequency of deadstock on the farm. See <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/09-029.htm> for detailed information.

On-farm composting

On-farm composting of deadstock can be an excellent source of nutrients for land application. If composting is done properly, pathogens will be killed, resulting in safe, high quality compost. Improper composting can cause odors, scavenging, and negative environmental impacts. Materials such as sawdust, straw, hay, silage, manure, or poultry litter can be used to start the composting pile. There are regulations on composting sites, containers, materials, and maintenance of the compost pile. Be sure your system is in compliance with all regulations before using it to dispose of deadstock. The best composting method will vary based on management and factors such as number of mortalities, access to equipment, and composting site design. Refer to <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/09-031.htm> for information on on-farm bin composting of deadstock.

Other options

Incineration, disposal vessels, anaerobic digesters, delivery to a waste disposal site and delivery to a veterinarian for postmortem are other options for handling deadstock. More information on these can be found here: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/09-025.htm#3>

On-farm mortality records

Regardless of method of disposal, anyone disposing of dead farm animals must keep specific records. This applies even if you are using the services of a deadstock collector. The record must contain: the species and age of the animal; animal weight (at time of disposal); date, time, and cause of death (if known); date, time, method, and place of disposal; and, date on which the record was made. If the animal is incinerated, a record of incineration temperatures must also be included.

Be sure to also record the ear tag number of all dead veal cattle in your head health records. The Verified Veal Program (VVP) has a sample Veal Treatment & History Record that can be used for this. If leaving the carcass for deadstock collection in a designated area (also a requirement of the VVP), the ear tag must be left on the carcass. If you are disposing of the carcass on-farm, you need to call the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) and retire the tag number (by reporting the death, you are providing final traceability – i.e. the animal won't be leaving your premises). If you are sending an animal for deadstock, the collector will report for you. While there are no rules regarding whether or not you need to leave the ear tag on the carcass when disposing on-farm, the tag won't compost or decompose. Some producers prefer to remove it and dispose of it (they cannot be reused), so you can be sure it has been retired.

The record can be electronic or paper and must be kept for at least two years from the date it was made. The records must be stored on the farm on which the animal died, or a location that can be easily accessed when needed.

If the animal is disposed of on land you do not own, you must have written consent and provide the landowner with a copy of the mortality record. The landowner then must keep this record for at least two years. If you apply regulated compost to a registered parcel of land, you must keep records on the application of compost and keep the mortality record for at least two years.

Emergency Authorization

When emergency situations occur (e.g. barn fires) and dead farm animals cannot be disposed as specified under the regulations, the farm operator can apply to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and

Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) for an emergency authorization that will allow for alternate deadstock management methods. If granted, an emergency authorization will consider whatever conditions are best suited in protecting public interest. Refer to <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/09-023.htm> for more information on emergency authorizations and application instructions. Staff from OMAFRA and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) can help the operator in preparing the application for an emergency authorization.

Summary

Dealing with deadstock is an unfortunate but necessary task on livestock farms. Deciding on the best way to handle deadstock depends on a variety of factors including amount, frequency, and size of deadstock as well as available land and equipment. Every farm should have and follow a standard operating procedure (SOP) for handling deadstock to ensure deadstock management protects human and animal health and the environment. ■

For more information on deadstock disposal, call the Agricultural Information Contact Centre at 1-877-424-1300, email ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca or visit www.ontario.ca/omafr. O. Reg. 106/09: Disposal of dead farm animals can be found at <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/090106#BK35>

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