

Mortality Management Guidelines

Chapter 16-25 WAC

Last Update: 5/1/07

Disposal of dead livestock

16-25-010

Purpose.

The purpose of this rule is to prevent the transmission of livestock diseases and to protect the public health, safety, and welfare and Washington state's livestock industry through the proper routine disposal of carcasses of livestock that have died because of disease. The statutory authority for the rule is found in RCW [16.36.010](#) and [16.36.092](#).

16-25-015

Applicability.

This rule applies to the disposal of livestock that has died because of disease or an unknown cause.

16-25-020

Definitions.

In addition to the definitions found in RCW [16.36.005](#), the following definitions apply to this chapter:

"Burial" means placing a carcass below the natural surface of the ground and completely covering it with soil.

"Carcass" means the body or tissues of a livestock animal that has died or has been killed other than by slaughter for human or animal consumption or commercial use.

"Composting" means the aerobic decomposition of organic matter under controlled conditions.

"Death from disease" means livestock that has died from a disease or an unknown cause.

"Emergency disposal" means disposal of carcasses ordered depopulated by the director or depopulated as a result of a reportable disease listed in WAC [16-70-010](#)

"Incineration" means the controlled and monitored combustion of carcasses for the purposes of volume reduction and pathogen control as approved by the department of ecology or local air pollution control authorities.

"Landfill" means a permitted facility, whether on-site or off-site, where solid waste is permanently placed in or on land, in accordance with chapter [70.95](#) RCW and chapters [173-350](#) and [173-351](#) WAC.

"Livestock" means horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, bison, sheep, goats, swine, rabbits, llamas, alpacas, ratites, poultry, waterfowl, game birds, and other species so designated by statute. This term does not include free ranging wildlife as defined in Title [77](#) RCW.

"Natural decomposition" means decomposition of carcasses through natural decay processes on the surface of the ground without cover material.

"Open burning" means the act of consuming or destroying a carcass by fire with or without the use of an accelerant.

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"**Rangeland**" means a large open area for grazing of livestock in excess of one hundred sixty acres of contiguous usable grazing or timberland.

"**Rendering**" means the practice of using heat to convert dead animal carcasses and animal by-products into marketable products, such as meat and bone meal for animal feed, human food additives, or cosmetics.

"**Routine disposal**" means the disposal of the carcass of a livestock animal that died in the normal course of business. Routine disposal does not include carcasses of livestock ordered depopulated by the director or depopulated as a result of a reportable disease listed in WAC [16-70-010](#).

16-25-025

Routine disposal.

A carcass must be disposed of within seventy-two hours of the time of death or discovery to avoid nuisance odors or disease. If weather conditions prevent burial within seventy-two hours and rendering, composting, landfilling, or natural decomposition cannot be accomplished, then the carcass must be buried as soon as the weather permits. The following are acceptable methods for the routine disposal of carcasses:

(1) **Burial.**

(a) A carcass may be disposed of by burial on the property where the livestock animal died if done with the approval of the property owner.

(b) A carcass must be buried to a depth so that no part of the carcass is nearer than three feet to the natural surface of the ground. Every part of the carcass must be covered with at least three feet of soil within twenty-four hours of placement in the ground.

(c) Carcass burial must be:

(i) At least three hundred feet from any well, spring, or body of surface water, such as a river, stream, lake, pond, or intermittent stream;

(ii) At least three hundred feet from any residence not owned by the owner of the livestock animal;

(iii) At least fifty feet from any property line between parcels under different ownership; and

(iv) Not in a low-lying area subject to seasonal flooding or within a hundred-year flood plain or in a manner that will impact groundwater.

(d) Each burial site is limited to one thousand pounds of carcasses or one livestock animal weighing more than one thousand pounds.

(e) Carcass burial is not allowed on a property of less than five acres, except for the burial of a single carcass weighing less than two hundred pounds. The maximum amount of land used for burial during any year is limited to ten percent of the property or one acre, whichever is greater.

(2) **Burning.** Open burning of carcasses is not allowed for routine disposal under RCW [70.94.775](#).

(3) **Composting.** Composting must be conducted in compliance with chapter [70.95](#) RCW and chapter [173-350](#) WAC.

(4) **Incineration.**

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(a) Complete incineration of carcasses to a mineral residue must be performed in an approved incineration facility or by a mobile air curtain incinerator; and

(b) Appropriate permits must be obtained in advance through the local air pollution control authority or the department of ecology in accordance with requirements of chapter [70.94](#) RCW, Washington Clean Air Act.

(5) **Landfill.** Carcasses may be disposed of at a privately or publicly owned landfill with prior approval of the local health officer and the landfill operator, and permitted in accordance with chapter [70.95](#) RCW and chapters [173-350](#) and [173-351](#) WAC.

(6) **Natural decomposition.** A livestock animal that dies on private or state rangeland from causes other than a significant infectious or contagious disease agent may be left to decompose naturally on that property as long as the carcass:

(a) Is at least one thousand three hundred twenty feet from any well, spring, sinkhole, or body of surface water such as a river, stream, lake, pond, or intermittent stream;

(b) Is at least one thousand three hundred twenty feet from any residence not owned by the owner of the dead livestock animal;

(c) Is at least one thousand three hundred twenty feet from any public roadway;

(d) Is out of public view; and

(e) Is left to decompose on the land with the property owner's permission.

(7) **Digestion.** Digestion of carcasses may be accomplished only in a properly designed and sized carcass digester approved by the director.

(8) **Rendering.** Carcasses may be rendered only by a rendering plant licensed under chapter [16.68](#) RCW, Disposal of dead animals.

16-25-030

Disposal of livestock that have died from a reportable disease.

The carcass of a livestock animal that has died from a reportable disease must be disposed of in consultation with the state veterinarian. The list of reportable diseases and reporting requirements are found in chapter [16-70](#) WAC.

16-25-040

General emergency authority.

If the state veterinarian determines there is an animal health emergency, the state veterinarian has the authority to specify the method of disposal and place additional requirements for the disposal of carcasses of livestock animals that die of disease or are euthanized to prevent the spread of disease.

[Statutory Authority: RCW [16.36.010](#), [16.36.092](#), and chapter [34.05](#) RCW. 07-10-086, § 16-25-040, filed 5/1/07, effective 6/1/07.]

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WAC 246-203-121

Disposal of Dead Animals

(1) Definitions

For the purpose of this regulation the following definitions apply:

- (a) "Burial" means completely covering with soil in a manner and location not requiring a permit for a landfill under chapter 70.95 RCW, Solid waste management -- Reduction and recycling.
- (b) "Composting" means a process of controlled aerobic decomposition in compliance with chapter 70.95 RCW, Solid waste management -- Reduction and recycling.
- (c) "Dead animal" means the carcass or tissue from an animal, large or small, except part of an animal used for food or other beneficial purpose in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. "Dead animal" does not mean a fish or other primarily aquatic animal.
- (d) "Incineration" means controlled and monitored combustion for the purposes of volume reduction and pathogen destruction in an enclosed device approved by the department of ecology or the local air pollution control authority under chapter 70.94 RCW, Washington Clean Air Act, and chapter 70.95 RCW, Solid waste management -- Reduction and recycling.
- (e) "Landfilling" means a process of disposal at a permitted facility where solid waste is permanently placed in or on land in compliance with rules adopted by the department of ecology under chapter 70.95 RCW, Solid waste management -- Reduction and recycling.
- (f) "Livestock" means horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, bison, sheep, goats, swine, rabbits, llamas, alpacas, ratites, poultry, waterfowl, game birds, or other species according to RCW 16.36.005.
- (g) "Natural decomposition" means natural decay on the surface of the ground without cover material.
- (h) "Rendering" means heat processing according to requirements under chapter 16.68 RCW, Disposal of dead animals.

(2) Disposal methods

- (a) Within seventy-two hours after death or discovery, the owner of a dead animal or, if the owner of the animal cannot be identified, the owner of the property on which the animal is found must properly dispose of the dead animal. A dead animal must be covered or otherwise removed from public view immediately upon discovery by the person responsible for disposing of the dead animal.
- (b) The person responsible for disposal of a dead animal must dispose of it in a manner so as not to become a public or common nuisance or cause pollution of surface or groundwater.
- (c) The person responsible for disposal of a dead animal must dispose of it by burial, landfilling, incineration, composting, rendering, or another method approved by the local health officer (such as natural decomposition) that is not otherwise prohibited by federal, state, or local law or regulation.
- (d) A person disposing of a dead animal by burial must place it so that every part is covered by at least three feet of soil; at a location not less than one hundred feet from any well, spring, stream or other surface waters; not in a low-lying area subject to seasonal flooding or within a one hundred-year flood plain; and not in a manner likely to contaminate groundwater.

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(e) A person disposing of a dead animal must not bury or compost it within the sanitary control area of a public drinking water supply source as designated under chapter [246-290](#) WAC, Public water supplies, or chapter [246-291](#) WAC, Group B public water systems.

(f) The local health officer may specify the method of disposal for a dead animal if:

(i) The animal died with a communicable disease transmissible to humans; or

(ii) The local health officer considers a public health emergency to exist.

(g) The provisions of RCW [16.36.092](#) and chapter [16-25](#) WAC supersede the provisions of this regulation for the disposal of a livestock animal that has died because of disease or unknown cause.

[Statutory Authority: RCW [43.20.050](#)(2). 07-14-149, § 246-203-121, filed 7/5/07, effective 8/5/07.]