

Frequently Asked Questions

Dead Animal Disposal

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION | WWW.IOWADNR.GOV

Q How long do I have to dispose of dead livestock?

A The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship requires that you must dispose of all dead livestock as soon as reasonably possible after the death of the animal.

Q Can I burn dead livestock?

A You may incinerate dead livestock in an engineered incinerator. Homemade incinerators may not be used. Open burning is not permitted.

Q Can I bury dead livestock?

A Yes. Burial must be no greater than 6 feet deep with a minimum of 30 inches of soil cover. Burial must be in well drained soils and be at least 2 feet above the highest groundwater elevation. Burial must be at least 100 feet from a private well, 200 feet from a public well, 50 feet from an adjacent property line, 500 feet from a residence and more than 100 feet from a stream, lake or pond. Burial cannot be in a wetland, floodplain or shoreline area.

Q How many animals can I bury?

A You may bury up to 44 butcher or breeding hogs, 7 slaughter or feeding cattle, 73 sheep or lambs, 400 poultry carcasses on any given acre per year.

Q What if my rendering service is late or cannot make it within a few days?

A You are ultimately responsible for the proper disposal of your livestock. Consider an alternative such as burial or taking the animals to a landfill.

Q I have several animals that die daily. Do I have to cover and dig a new hole every day?

A No. You must cover all animals as soon as reasonably possible with six inches of soil, and then cover with 30 inches of soil when the burial pit is at its maximum allowable capacity. If I cannot bury or render my dead livestock, what else can I do? Contact your local sanitary landfill. Landfills will generally accept dead livestock.

Q Can I bury dead livestock on my neighbor's farm ground that I rent?

A No. Dead livestock can only be buried on the premises where they originated.

Q What happens if I have a disaster and a mass die-off?

A Contact a rendering service, landfill or the local DNR Environmental Protection Division office for further assistance.

Q Can I compost dead livestock?

A Yes. Contact the DNR or your local Iowa State University Extension office for information on proper livestock composting.

- Composting Dead Animals: A new solution to an old problem
- Composting Swine Mortalities in Iowa
- Requirements for composting can be found in Chapter 105.3 (general requirements) and Chapter 105.6 (specific requirements) of the Iowa Administrative Code under Environmental Protection Commission.

Q Am I required to have a "dead box"?

A No. A "dead box" or some similar container to store dead livestock will reduce the chances of disease transmission and improve the aesthetics of your operation. However, it is not a requirement.