

Animal Carcass Disposal

The responsibility of owning livestock does not end when an animal dies. In Indiana, state law requires an animal owner to dispose properly of a livestock carcass within 24 hours of learning of an animal's death.

The list of approved disposal methods is overseen by the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) as a matter of health and safety.

BOAH has approved seven carcass disposal methods for animal remains: burial, above-ground burial, incineration, composting, rendering, exotic animal feeding, and anaerobic and chemical digestion. (NOTE: These rules do **not** apply to small animal species, such as fish, reptiles, dogs, cats and small game. Wildlife, i.e., creatures not under someone's care, as well as dead livestock being transported by the owner to a diagnostic facility are also exempt from this rule.)

Rendering

A common option is removing carcasses to an approved disposal plant. Rendering can be a convenient, clean and waste-free solution that ultimately recycles the remains into other products. The renderer generally provides on-farm pick-up for a fee. Each company determines which species they will accept and geographic locations they will serve. A list of Indiana licensed renderers is available online at: <https://bit.ly/licensedrenderers>

Burial

Burial is another authorized means of disposal. By law, the carcasses or condemned and inedible waste must be placed to a depth below grade with a sufficient covering to prevent resurfacing of any part of the carcass, scavenging, and odor emissions that create a public nuisance. Livestock owners should take care to avoid burying remains near waterways, such as ponds and streams.

The burial must occur on the owner's premises or other location authorized by the landowner.

Producers may also consider discarding dead animals at a local landfill.

Landfill disposal qualifies as burial under BOAH rules. Each landfill operator decides what material it will accept.

A city or town may have additional ordinances to regulate or prohibit burial within the city or town limits. Local authorities should be consulted to learn about local ordinances.

Above-Ground Burial

An alternative to traditional burial is above-ground burial. When burying carcasses above ground, soil excavation of the burial trench must be to a depth in the range of 20 inches to 24 inches with at least 12 inches of carbonaceous material covering the entire bottom of the trench.

Whole carcasses of adult cattle, equine, and swine must be placed in a single layer. Carcasses placed in the trench are to be covered within 24 hours.

Excavated soil should be placed on top of the animal carcasses or condemned and inedible waste. Soil must be thoroughly seeded



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to facilitate the growth of the vegetation. The burial trench shall not be grated or disturbed until carcasses reach a state of decomposition where no visible soft tissue is present.

Incineration

“Thorough and complete incineration” of the carcass in an enclosed incinerator is another option for animal owners. Incineration can be convenient for those with access to the necessary equipment. A barrel or open burn pile is illegal under the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) rules. Producers choosing to install an on-farm incinerator should contact IDEM’s Air Division to determine if a permit is required.

The resulting finished product may contain small bones, bone fragments, feathers, and wool that have been processed but retain their structure. Any animal matter remaining after incineration must be buried or otherwise discarded according to another approved disposal method.

Composting

On-farm composting is an option for livestock owners. By following a proven “recipe,” an established on-farm composter can produce nutrient-rich organic matter suitable for field application in a few months. Dry organic material, like sawdust, is layered with animal remains to generate heat to speed decomposition. Carcasses are completely composted when no visible pieces of soft tissue remain.

The resulting finished product may contain small bones, bone fragments, feathers, and wool that have been processed but retain their structure. Large femur bones or skulls from adult livestock should be crushed or removed from the compost to the extent practicable.

State law requires that animals be kept from accessing the compost pile. Domestic and wild animals are to be controlled so they do not disrupt the compost pile. This can be accomplished by surrounding the pile with a fence, placing it in a building, covering the pile, or using an in-vessel composting system.

Run-on and leachate runoff must be prevented or controlled. The material must be thoroughly and completely composted. NOTE: Under IDEM rules, confined feeding livestock facilities composting carcasses must include the compost facility in their permit application.

Producers also have the option to transport carcasses to a common compost pile for their operation. Persons wanting to operate a communal compost pile that accepts carcasses from outside sources must obtain a disposal plant license from BOAH.

Anaerobic and Chemical Digestion

Digestion is another convenient method of disposal similar to composting. The procedure must be conducted in accordance with state environmental laws and the system must not create a health hazard to humans or animals. Businesses accepting carcasses from outside sources must obtain a Disposal Plant Permit from BOAH.

Exotic Animal Feeding

Exotic animal owners continue to seek out sources of livestock carcasses to feed large cats and other unusual species, which is permitted under the carcass disposal rules. Livestock producers should ask if the exotic owner is registered with the state before allowing a pick up of dead stock. Additionally, producers transporting animal carcasses must keep records of where their carcasses are taken.

Individuals accepting carcasses for feeding must keep records of all the animals they receive and from whom. A description and date of each carcass fed must also be recorded. Animal carcasses must be completely disposed of within 72 hours of arriving at the premise, or be refrigerated or frozen for long-term storage.

Any person transporting animal carcasses must cover or contain the remains from public view, and the carcass must be transported in a manner that does not allow fluids to leak on public roads.