

3-16 Dead stock disposal

Even the best animal husbandry will not prevent the odd animal death. Disposing of dead stock appropriately is very important because:

- Decomposing dead stock is a source of disease producing bacteria and other organisms, e.g. salmonella, streptococcus and tuberculosis.
- Poor carcass disposal can result in contamination of groundwater and waterways, which may be sources of human and/or stock drinking water.
- Sight and smell of dead animals creates a bad public perception of the dairy industry.

The principles of dead stock management are:

- Dispose of the animal as soon as possible to reduce risk of disease spread.
- Utilise dead stock collection services if available, there is a “per head” fee for this.
- Do not leave dead stock on the roadside or within public view. Most collection services prefer to pick up inside the farm gate.
- The carcass must not be left within 45m of the farm dairy or within 50m of a water source
- Keep dead stock out of waterways.

Evaluate your disposal options.

If there is no collection service available there are other disposal options to consider.

Disposal Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Burial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple • Cost effective • Out of sight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use this method if groundwater level is high • Predator and vermin control is necessary • Do not bury stock within 50m of a waterway
Offal Holes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple • Cost effective • Easy to manage • Out of sight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use this method if groundwater level is high • Most efficient when using small and infrequent amounts of offal • Predator and vermin control is necessary • Do not bury stock within 50m of a waterway

<p>Composting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can use in areas of high groundwater • Useful product generated • High composting temperatures destroys pathogens and disease • Can re-use sawdust from calf sheds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable source of sawdust required • Requires an understanding of composting • Must fence off compost pile from other stock • Do not spread finished compost on pasture grazed by stock
<p>Burning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carcass is destroyed quickly • Any pathogens present are destroyed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires extremely high temperatures to burn • Do not burn with rubbish such as tyres as toxic fumes released • Can cause odour and smoke nuisance • Bones remain after burning

Do's and Don'ts of Burial and Offal Holes

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slit the stomach of the carcass to allow the intestines out for faster decomposition • Puncture the rumen on its left side to release the gases to prevent toxic gas build up • Add a small amount of bacteria starter such as effluent sludge to speed up the decomposition process • Cover offal holes securely with a lid at all times • Once an offal hole is full to within 1 m of the surface it should be retired and filled up with earth compacted and re-grassed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not site offal holes or bury stock near waterways, property boundaries or areas with high groundwater. • Do not add lime to an offal hole or burial area as this slows down the decomposition process. • Do not use an offal hole as a rubbish dump. • Do not dispose of chemicals in offal holes. • Do not light fires anywhere near offal holes. • Do not locate offal holes and burial sites within 45m of the farm dairy.

Composting

Composting is an increasingly common stock disposal option that creates a useful product, reuses other farm resources such as calf-shed sawdust, and can be used in areas of high groundwater with minimal risk of contamination (where carried out correctly). Composting is a biological process by which organic wastes are converted into safe, stable humus by microorganisms. Carcasses are completely broken down within months, including bones. The high temperatures (around 70°) generated by the composting process destroy pathogens and prevent fly incubation. However, it is important that finished compost not be spread on pasture grazed by stock. Suitable end uses include domestic gardens, shelter belts, woodlots or gate sales.

Burning

Burning is the last resort disposal method. Use an incinerator if possible or otherwise use a shallow pit with wood in the bottom and the carcass on top. It may be necessary to use an accelerant to get the fire up to the very high temperatures required to burn a carcass.

Do not use tyres as a fuel to burn the animal, as it will produce a dark and toxic smoke.

Restricted fire seasons or fire bans will require you to obtain a fire permit from your district council