

## How to dispose of a dead animal body



***One of the hardest things to deal with after the death of large animal is disposing of the carcass.***

**Words: Nadene Hall**

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 is a bad look for any farmer

## **THE PRINCIPLES OF DEAD STOCK MANAGEMENT ARE:**

dispose of the animal as soon as possible to reduce risk of disease spread.

utilise free dead stock collection services that operate through most regions.

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 a dairy shed or in a waterway.

It's best to evaluate your disposal options before you are forced to in bad circumstances. If there is no collection service available there are other disposal options to consider.

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## **BURIAL**

### **Advantages**

simple  
cost effective  
out of sight

### **Disadvantages**

cannot be used if groundwater level is high  
predator and vermin control is necessary  
stock cannot be buried within 100m of a waterway

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## **OFFAL HOLES**

### **Advantages**

simple  
cost effective  
easy to manage  
out of sight

### **Disadvantages**

cannot be used if groundwater level is high

predator and vermin control is necessary  
stock cannot be buried within 100m of a waterway  
most efficient when using small and infrequent amounts of offal

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## **COMPOSTING**

### **Advantages**

an use in areas of high groundwater  
useful end product generated  
high composting temperatures destroys pathogens and disease  
good way to reuse sawdust from calf sheds or stables

### **Disadvantages**

reliable source of sawdust required  
requires an understanding of composting  
must fence off compost pile from other stock  
cannot use finished compost on pasture grazed by stock

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## **BURNING**

### **Advantages**

carcass is destroyed quickly  
any pathogens present are destroyed

### **Disadvantages**

requires extremely high temperatures to burn  
do not burn with rubbish  
can cause odour and smoke nuisance  
bones remain after burning

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## **DO'S AND DON'TS**

## **OFFAL HOLES** SHARES

## **Do**

Open up 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 regrassed.

## **Don't**

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 dead stock in sawdust is a new method of disposing of dead stock. If done correctly the composting process creates high enough temperatures to destroy bacteria and the sawdust soaks up liquid by-product, preventing leaching to groundwater.

Carcasses are completely broken down within months, including bones. However the process does require a good understanding of composting, and sufficient amounts of sawdust must be available. Old sawdust from calf sheds can be re-used for composting. The final composted product must not be spread back on to grazed pastures. Ensure the composting area is well fenced off from other stock.

## **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.

**SHARES**