Potential Environmental and Biosecurity Risk of Dead Animal Disposal

Lowest Risk

- Buried 6-ft deep in appropriate soils and buried more than 200 feet from a water body, watercourse, well or spring.
- Picked up by rendering company within 48 hours after death or properly composted on the farm.
- Partially buried less than 6-ft deep or buried closer than 200 feet from a water body, watercourse, well or spring.
- Carcass is left outside for scavengers or to decay.

Caution

- Animals showing signs of a neurological disease must be reported to authorities and disposed of in the manner they recommend. It is not clear whether prions, the agent that causes Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (Mad Cow Disease), would be destroyed in the composting process.
- Animals that show signs of a neurological disease should not be composted. Animals under quarantine that die and those with anthrax should not be composted.

Why Farms Should Compost Mortality and Residuals

- Pathogen kill occurs in thermophilic composts
- Can be done any time of the year, even when the ground is frozen
- Can be done with equipment available on most farms
- Relatively odor free
- All sizes of animals can be composted
- Placental membranes and other tissue can be composted
- Relatively low labor and management needed
- Low cost

Source - “Natural Rendering: Composting Livestock Mortality and Butcher Waste” fact sheet

These posters were developed by the Cornell Waste Management Institute • cwmi.css.cornell.edu