



**KENTUCKY**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE**

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# **LIVESTOCK DISPOSAL**

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F A C T S H E E T

# Disposal of Animal Carcasses

## Environmental Guidance for Kentucky's Agribusiness

*The Department for Environmental Protection (DEP) and Department of Agriculture have developed the following guidance regarding requirements and recommendations for the livestock and poultry industries on carcass disposal in the instance of a mass casualty incident.*

### Introduction

In the instance of a mass casualty or depopulation event at a livestock or poultry farm, understanding the proper disposal requirements associated with each option is important. There are various options for carcass disposal and handling, as addressed in the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service guidance for "On-Farm Disposal of Animal Mortalities, ID-167" (<http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id167/id167.pdf>).



### Statutes and Regulations

In accordance with Kentucky Division of Waste Management (DWM) regulations, animal carcasses are solid wastes when discarded (meaning not processed or rendered). Carcasses may be managed as provided by Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) 257 and 302 Kentucky Administrative Regulations (KAR) Chapter 22 through the Department of Agriculture, unless the practice is found to violate general provisions against land, air or water pollution, as provided in KRS 224 and 401 KAR through DEP. Under all circumstances, carcass management shall not violate Environmental Performance Standards outlined in [401 KAR 47:030](#) or otherwise present an imminent threat to human health or the environment.

### Composting

The preferred method for carcass management is on-site composting. Compost that will not be sold or used off-site is not required to be registered with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture or Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection but must:

#### **On-Farm Composting**

*Composting, if done following simple but important guidelines, can be an environmentally sound and economical option. Kentucky Law [KRS 257.160\(1\)\(f\)](#) allows disposal of animal carcasses by composting if the disposal is performed in an approved facility and according to the Agricultural Board's administrative regulations (302 KAR).*

1. Follow the guidelines established by the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service publication "On-Farm Composting of Animal Mortalities: ID-166" <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id166/id166.pdf>; and
2. Meet the requirements of the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Plan.



**Waste Management**  
**Water Quality**

## Composting (cont.)

A grower does not need a permit to apply compost on the farm at which the mortalities occurred. If the facility distributes the compost, regardless of whether or not carcasses are part of the mix, registration is required through the Division of Waste Management. “Distribution” is considered to apply only to selling or giving away to the public or outside parties. It is recommended, when the compost is finished, that a portion be retained as a carbon-base material for use in ongoing mortality management.

## On-Site Burial

On-site burial may be conducted provided the site meets certain conditions and does not create an adverse impact or potential for release. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Office of the Kentucky State Veterinarian requirements indicate that carcass burial shall:

- ♦ occur at a location that is never covered with the overflow of ponds or streams and that is not less than one hundred (100) feet distant from any watercourse, sinkhole, well, spring, public highway, residence or stable;
- ♦ be placed in an opening in the earth at least four (4) feet deep, the abdominal and thoracic cavities opened wide their entire length with a sharp instrument; and
- ♦ cover the entire carcass with two (2) inches of quicklime and at least three (3) feet of earth.

### ***Agriculture Water Quality Best Management Practices***

Kentucky’s Agriculture Water Quality Authority has approved Best Management Practices (BMPs) to assist landowners as they work toward conserving Kentucky’s land and water.

For a list of BMPs, please visit: <https://eec.ky.gov/Natural-Resources/Conservation/Pages/Best-Management-Practices.aspx>.

### ***Mortality Composting Protocols***

For more information regarding APHIS protocols, visit [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/emergency\\_management/downloads/hpai/](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/emergency_management/downloads/hpai/).

The Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) has authority under the Agriculture Water Quality Act and can provide technical guidance with regard to identifying an appropriate on-site burial location. Requirements in the Agriculture Water Quality Plan (AWQP) address locating sites, including setbacks for surface water, sinkholes, wellheads, springs, etc. Implementation of setbacks should consider site-specific best management practices (BMPs), which may include AWQP BMPs to protect or enhance water quality.

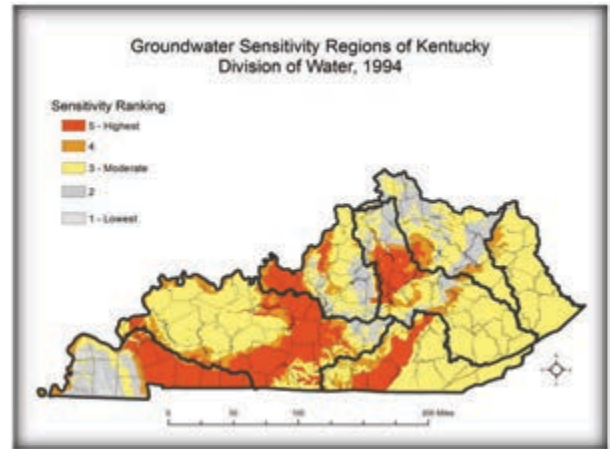
Avoidance of problematic areas and ensure adequate soil profile below the carcass. Avoid flood zones, high water table/wetlands, sinkholes and other karst features and areas adjacent to special use waters.

Maps and data available through the DOW, Kentucky Geological Survey and other sources are very useful in identifying these areas and a potential on-site burial location (<http://watermaps.ky.gov>). Additional assistance for siting may be provided by DOW by contacting 502-564-3410.



## On Site Burial (cont.)

Although formal authorization of a site is not required by DOW, expertise from agency staff is available to assist in identifying potential concerns or appropriate locations to perform on-site burial. When selecting a site or conducting on-site burial, ensure that the activity is conducted in accordance with the Office of the State Veterinarian and does not violate the Environmental Performance Standards in DWM Regulation [401 KAR 47:030](#).



## Landfilling

In some cases, carcasses may be disposed of in a permitted solid waste contained landfill. Contact your local landfill to identify whether they are able to accept the carcasses. A map and list of permitted solid waste-contained landfills is available at <https://eec.ky.gov/Environmental-Protection/Waste/Pages/Solid-Waste-Facility-Reports.aspx>.

## Transportation

Carcasses transported over the highways must be covered with a tarpaulin or other heavy material. No portion of the carcass can be exposed, and the sides of the truck used must be made of a solid material. Further information can be found in KRS 263.120 and KRS 263.130 at [Kentucky Revised Statutes - Chapter 263](#).

### Agency Contacts

For more information regarding environmental regulations, please contact:

**Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection**  
502-782-6189

[envhelp@ky.gov](mailto:envhelp@ky.gov)

<https://eec.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>

For regulatory guidance regarding livestock and poultry mortality, please contact:

**Office of State Veterinarian**  
502-782-5901

[statevet@ky.gov](mailto:statevet@ky.gov)

[www.kyagr.com/statevet/](http://www.kyagr.com/statevet/)

### Emergency Response

In the instance of a mass casualty, be sure to contact:

**Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection**  
**Emergency Response Team**  
800-928-2380

**Kentucky Department of Agriculture**  
**Office of State Veterinarian**  
502-782-5901



## Kentucky Environmental Compliance Assistance Program

Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet  
300 Sower Boulevard, 1st Floor, Frankfort, KY 40601  
Assistance Hotline: [envhelp@ky.gov](mailto:envhelp@ky.gov) | 502-782-6189

