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Disposal: What You Need to Know Seven-days Before You Depopulate

A guide for pork producers that are planning for the disposal of a large number of animals in the next 7 to 14 days. What immediate steps must be planned for if this process to occur?

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Approved methods for managing mortality in Michigan

The [Michigan Bodies of Dead Animals Act](#) (BODA; Act 239 of 1982, as amended) regulates the management of dead animals in Michigan. This law applies to all methods of disposal, even in emergency situations such as market disruption brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under this act, there are alternatives for emergency dead animal disposal.

- **Off-site disposal**
 - Landfill and rendering have the greatest advantages in this situation.
 - Incineration at [MSU-VDL](#), but only in limited amounts and it is expensive.
- **On-site disposal**
 - Burial is an alternative in the right location.
 - Composting of mass amounts on bare soil is currently (May 12, 2020) not allowable, it can be done on approved liners or indoors. Allowance of mass composting on bare soil has been requested and may become available soon per approval by the state. Contact [Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development \(MDARD\)](#) or [MSU Extension](#) to know for sure.

Again, planning ahead 7 to 14 days is possible in this situation. Producers should make appropriate contacts to explore their resources. Before making contact, know the amount of mortality in number of head and total pounds expected.

Landfill

Landfill options are coordinated directly with the landfill by the producer. Producers need to contact the landfill they intend to receive animals for the specific guidelines on acceptance and delivery of that landfill.

- Stipulations for landfill use require that landfills only source product from the county in which they are located. If county lines will be crossed, approval will need to be granted by [Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy \(EGLE\)](#).
- Specific information needed: amount of mortality expected, timeline for delivery of animal mortality, and transportation of carcasses.

Rendering

Utilizing rendering services for disposal of animal mortality is a good option. Producers will need to contact the renderer directly.

- Producers must communicate a week or two in advance of the services needed.
- Producers will be required to provide documentation to obtain rendering service. This can be done prior to needing this service.
- Plan to deliver animals to the renderer early in the week (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday).
- Typically, rendering service will supply trailers/containers that will hold approximately 45,000 pounds of weight. Trailer sides are roughly 10 feet high; producers will need to source equipment capable of loading trailers from the side.

To contact an expert in your area, visit msue.anr.msu.edu/experts or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464)



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- Producers are responsible for loading the containers.
- Renderers will transport containers to their rendering locations.
- Specific information needed by the rendering company: weight of mortality, volume (a 300-pound hog is about 0.6 yd³), timeline (including start date and time), and number of trailers needed.
- For rendering, the cost will be approximately 2 cents per pound, or \$6 for a 300-pound animal.

Incineration

Incineration as a method of mortality disposal is available at the [MSU-VDL](#) on a limited basis. Capacity limits are approximately 8,000 lbs. per day.

- Euthanasia methods using gunshot are not acceptable at this facility.
- Fee for service rates will apply and cost estimates are approximately \$20.00 per nursery size pig.

Burial

At times burial may be an efficient method of disposal. Depending on the seasonal high-water table level and soil conditions, care must be taken to minimize any environmental effects from this disposal option. For producers considering this method it is important to understand that:

- The total animal carcass weight in a common grave cannot exceed 5,000 pounds per acre.
- If there is more than one common grave per acre, each common grave within that acre must be separated by a minimum of 100 feet.
- Animal carcasses in a common grave must be covered with at least one foot of soil within 24 hours of burial and must receive at least two feet of soil as final cover at the natural soil level.

On-Site Composting

Composting on your farm can be done if other, more convenient options are not available for you. As of May 12, 2020, operations accumulating MORE than 20,000 pounds annually are required to compost in or on a liner meeting the [National Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\) 313 standards](#). A request has been made by the [Michigan Pork Producers Association \(MPPA\)](#) to have this requirement waived for this emergency. Check today with [MDARD](#) or [MSU Extension](#) or [NRCS](#) to know if mass composting on bare soil is allowed.

Get assistance in planning a composting system using windrows, including size of windrows, number of windrows, amounts of compost materials needed, and the best site on your farm to complete the composting.

- [MSU Extension](#) is able to help producers use one of the following resources to determine the size of the composting site, how much material is needed and where materials can be found: the [Spartan Emergency Animal Tissue Composting Planner](#) and the [USDA Carcass Management Dashboard and the USDA Carcass Management Calculator](#).

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- Site selection must be made in advance and consultation with [NRCS](#), [MSU Extension](#), [MDARD Right-to-Farm](#) or [Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program \(MAEAP\)](#) is advised.

Environmental considerations include:

- Site should be well drained with a minimum setback of 200 feet from waters of the state (this includes: lakes, streams, wetlands, sinkholes, seasonal seeps, or other landscape features that indicate the area is hydrologically sensitive).
- A minimum of 2 feet above the seasonal high-water table.
- A minimum of 200 feet from any well or nearest non-farm residence.

Funding available to help with disposal

[USDA's NRCS](#) is offering financial and technical assistance to livestock producers for animal mortality disposal. Producers must file an [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) application (Form NRCS-CPA-1200) with [local NRCS field office](#) prior to the planned depopulation event.

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