

Methods of handling livestock mortalities in Ontario: A survey of producers

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Background

What methods are livestock and poultry producers to deal with mortalities? How satisfied are they with the method? What are some typical costs? These are questions that were addressed in a recent survey by Ridgetown College, University of Guelph. It was carried out in the spring and summer of 2003 and was sponsored by the Ontario Livestock Mortality Recycling Project Steering Committee and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF).

During the period from May to August, 636 people were contacted. Surveys were completed by 316 livestock and poultry producers. This list was comprised of 92 beef producers, 78 poultry, 74 dairy, 65 swine and seven sheep producers.

What we found

a) General

- Many of the operations relied on more than one method for mortality disposal - often using one method for small animals and one for large.
- Several landfill sites were surveyed - while some landfill sites will accept livestock mortalities, most will not.

b) Incineration

- Incineration was used on eight percent of the farms, mainly on poultry farms, and over half of the incinerators were home-built.

c) Composting

- Composting was used on 26% of the farms.
- Composting was relatively new to many of the farmers, but the level of satisfaction was fairly high.
- Forty-one percent of poultry producers and 37% of swine producers used composting (at least as one of their disposal methods).
- The most common choice of substrate used for composting was solid manure (used 70% of the time).

d) Licensed pickup by dead stock service

- Pickup of mortalities by a licensed dead stock service was used on 61% of the farms.
- Licensed pickup was most used by the dairy and beef producers.
- Producers reported cost increases for this service of 100 to 300% after May, 2003 as a result of the Canadian BSE case.

e) Burial

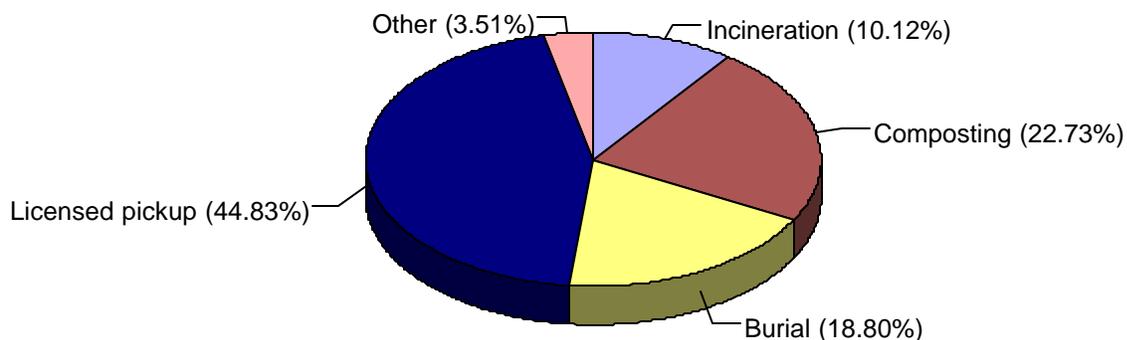
- Burial was used on 28% of the farms
- Burial was most popular among beef

- producers.
- Most burials were reported in soils with more than five metres depth to bedrock or the water table.
 - About one third of burials took place in sand or gravel soils.

f) Other

- Other methods of disposal are used on a few farms, sometimes relying on wildlife to help get rid of the carcass (mainly used in fairly remote areas).

When asked to pick their top choice for livestock mortality disposal, the most popular choice, at 45%, was licensed pickup; followed by 23% choosing composting. See the accompanying graph.



Preferred method of mortality disposal for the producers surveyed

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