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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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WMD-SW-20

2009

## **Disposal of Dead Animals**

The following describes the Department of Environmental Services policies and outlines acceptable management practices for the disposal of animal carcasses. RSA 149-M requires that all facilities engaged in the disposal of solid waste, such as landfills, obtain a permit from the NHDES Waste Management Division. Although dead animals are considered solid waste by statutory definition, NHDES recognized that the need for the prompt disposal of the carcasses makes it impractical to manage such burial through the traditional permit process, and has developed this policy to identify alternative criteria acceptable to the State.

### **Incidental Animal Burial**

The incidental burial of animal carcasses is considered to be the burial of the carcasses at the same location where the animal lived, including the burial of family pets or a small number of large animal carcasses in farm locations. A solid waste facility permit is not required provided the person controlling the land where the animal is buried agrees to the location and the grave is covered with sufficient soil to avoid disturbance by other animals. It is recommended that the burial be at least 75 feet from any water supply and four feet above seasonal high groundwater table to maximize aerobic decomposition. Prior to burial, local authorities such as the town health officer or zoning administrator should be contacted to ensure compliance with any town zoning or health ordinances.

For the one-time disposal on-site of a large number of carcasses, such as when a herd or flock must be destroyed, no permit from NHDES is required and the same burial requirements as above apply. However, this disposal must take place only under the auspices of the local health officer and with the approval of the New Hampshire State Veterinarian's office, (603) 271-2404. It is further recommended that "quick lime" be applied during burial to reduce odors and promote decomposition.

### **Animal Health Emergency**

In the case of an animal health emergency, such as an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease where animal carcasses must not be allowed to leave the farm because of the highly infectious nature of the disease, burial of animal remains on-site does not require a permit from NHDES. However, the destruction and burial must be done under the direction of the State Veterinarian's office. No specific setbacks are required, but the location of the on-site burial should be selected to

maximize the distance from groundwater, surface water, bedrock, property lines and drinking water wells as much as practical. The location of all such burials should be noted on a site plan (sketch is acceptable) and submitted to NHDES together with a narrative describing the number and type of animals disposed.

### **Pet Cemeteries**

Pet cemeteries where animals are buried in individual grave sites are exempt from obtaining a solid waste facility permit provided that:

- The location shall be at least 100 feet from any property boundary or surface water, 200 feet from a private or community water supply, and 400 feet from a municipal water supply.
- The buried material shall be placed at least 4 feet above the seasonal high water table and bedrock.
- The carcasses shall be covered with at least 3 feet of clean fill immediately following placement in the ground.
- Written notification shall be provided to the state veterinarian in instances where 10 or more carcasses are buried.

### **Commercial Disposal Facilities**

Commercial disposal (other than the pet cemetery) or incineration facilities **do** require a solid waste facility permit from NHDES Waste Management Division. Information on permit application may be obtained by calling (603) 271-2925. In addition, depending on case-by-case conditions, burial may require a groundwater permit from NHDES' Water Division ((603) 271-2513); and incineration may require an air permit from NHDES Air Resources Division ((603) 271-1370).

### **Burial of Infectious Waste Prohibited**

It should be emphasized that this policy is for the disposal of **animal carcasses only** and does not include any other waste. Infectious waste as defined by Solid Waste Rules (including needles, syringes, pharmaceuticals, dressings, etc.) shall **not** be disposed with carcasses. Special disposal requirements apply to these materials. Failure to comply with these regulations may result in enforcement actions by the Department of Environmental Services.

For more information, contact: NHDES Waste Management Division, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-2925; [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov) .