

# Livestock Carcass Management

*Tracy Schohr, UC Cooperative Extension Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor Plumas, Sierra, and Butte counties; David Lile, UC Cooperative Extension Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor Lassen County; and Laura Snell, UC Cooperative Extension Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor Modoc County.*

## **Overview**

During the course of livestock production, ranchers will be faced with animal disposal events. It is important for ranchers to have proper carcass disposal plans in place to prevent public nuisances, protect natural resources and remove food sources that can attract livestock predators (e.g. wolves). This fact sheet was developed in July 2019 as a guide for ranchers in rangeland settings. It provides many state and county guidelines and procedures for proper disposal of carcasses.



Cattle carcass being prepped for composting.  
(credit: Rivers)

## **Regional Water Quality Control Board**

There are no prohibitions from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board or the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board on the burial of livestock carcasses in rangeland settings. The water boards support the procedures for on-site burial outlined below. However, Confined Animal Facilities that are regulated under General Waste Discharge Requirements (e.g. dairies, feedlots, auction yards) have specific guidelines for carcass management within their operation and maintenance plan (Snyder and Letton, 2019). Additionally, regulations state animal carcasses from confined animal operations shall be collected, stored, and removed from the property to an approved processing facility or disposal site prior to the creation of adverse public health/well-being conditions, or processed or disposed of on the property in a manner approved by the Enforcement Agency (14 CCR § 17823.5).

## **Resources Agency**

In the California Code of Regulations Title 14 § 17823.5 it states animal carcasses from animals on pasture or rangeland shall be managed so as to prevent the creation of excessive vectors or other adverse public health/well-being conditions. This language aligns with many local county ordinances, a subsection for Northern California counties is listed below.

## **Department of Fish and Wildlife**

When disposing of a carcass it is unlawful to deposit, permit to pass into, or place where it can pass into the waters of the state or within 150 feet of the highwater mark of the waters of the state under §FGC-5652. Furthermore, this code does prohibit a rancher from abandoning a carcass that may die within area described above.

## **California Department of Food and Agriculture**

According to Food and Agriculture Code (FAC) §19348, for routine livestock mortality, animal owners can choose to bury the animal on the owner's property after the animal dies if the burial is within three (3) miles of where the animal died. If to be disposed of offsite, routine mortality carcasses shall be transported by a CDFA licensed dead animal hauler to a licensed rendering plant, a licensed collection center, an animal disease diagnostic laboratory acceptable to the department, the nearest crematory, or to a destination in another state that has been approved for that purpose by the appropriate authorities in that state.



Trail camera photo of wolf on bone pile.

If an animal dies from a contagious disease, FAC §9143 states that the animal shall not be used for the food of any human being, domestic animal, or fowl. Also, the Natural Resources Code § 17823.5 states the carcasses of animals with any contagious disease shall be disposed of by means prescribed by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Division of Animal Industry. Additionally, during an emergency, the California Department of Food Agriculture may work with Cal EPA, including CalRecycle and the water boards, and local jurisdictions to allow temporary disposal at permitted landfills (e.g. 2018 Camp Fire in Butte County and 2006 heat wave in San Joaquin Valley).

## **Department of Resource, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle)**

The composting of unprocessed mammalian tissue (e.g. cattle, goats, sheep), including but not limited to, flesh, organs, hide, blood, bone and marrow is prohibited. (14 CCR § 17855.2). If rendering capacity is exceeded or suspended, the acceptance of dead animals may be accepted at a permitted solid waste landfill if allowed by local regulations (27 CCR § 20890). Additionally, open burning of solid waste (including livestock carcasses), except for the infrequent burning of agricultural wastes, silvicultural wastes, land clearing debris, diseased trees, or debris from emergency clean-up operations, is prohibited at all solid waste landfills (27 CCR § 20780). For information regarding a permitted solid waste landfill that can accept dead animals, contact your Solid Waste Local Enforcement Agency at [www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/LEA/Directory](http://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/LEA/Directory).

## **County Ordinances**

Most counties have ordinances in place regarding prohibition of dumping carcasses on roadway, airports, public beaches, parks or in waterways within a county. Many counties have specific ordinances including:

**Butte County** – The Health Department may declare an animal carcass on private property to be a public nuisance and shall notify the property owner of said declaration. The property owner shall remove or bury the animal carcass within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of said notice. If unable to locate owner, Health Department may enter upon the property to abate the nuisance at the cost of the owner. (§15.32)

**Lassen County** – The owner of a dead animal shall, within a reasonable time dispose of the carcass in a safe and sanitary manner. Additionally, if animal control disposes of a livestock carcass (e.g. horse, cattle, sheep) on any county-maintained road the owner shall pay a fee. (§8.08.090)

**Modoc County** – No specific county ordinances on record.

**Nevada County** – It shall be unlawful for any person owning or having under his control at the time of an animal's death to permit the carcass of any dead animal to remain unburied for a period in excess of twenty-four (24) hours. Failure to dispose of carcass, the county may impose penalty, along with costs of removal and

### **UCCE Research**

Composting of livestock carcasses in California is illegal, however it is a typical method for the disposal of animal mortalities in 42 states. University of California Cooperative Extension and California State University, Chico are conducting research on composting in California and coordinating with regulatory authorities on development of an additional option for livestock carcass management.

burial. (§G-IV 1.57). Additionally, §G-IV 8.3 outlines waste removal time, allowing 6 hours for dead animal removal in rural residential. Furthermore, county code prohibits burning of animal carcasses (§L-V 5.13).

**Placer County** – Any person owning or having under his or her control a dead livestock that weighs fifty (50) pounds or more, shall dispose of such dead animal within twenty-four (24) hours in a manner appropriate for the size and species. Failure to dispose of carcass, the county may impose penalty, along with costs of removal and burial. (§6.08.080) Additionally, §8.16.190 outlines waste removal time, allowing 6 hours for dead animal removal in rural residential areas.

**Plumas County** – Any person possessing a dead animal or fowl shall dispose of it in a safe and sanitary manner. If not properly disposed of, animal control may dispose of carcass for a fee to the owner or person in possession of carcass. (§6-1.110)

**Siskiyou County** – It is duty for person having a dead animal which is creating a health hazard or a nuisance upon their premises to bury such animal underground at a sufficient depth to allow for a least four (4') feet of backfill earth cover, with the exception of dogs, cats, and/or fowl which shall be buried at a sufficient depth to allow for at least two (2') feet of backfill earth cover. Such burial shall be either upon the premises of such owner, or upon the premises where such dead animal is found, or by other means acceptable to the Health Officer. Dead animals shall be properly disposed of within forty-eight (48) hours after they die. (§5-3.11.01)

**Sierra County** – It shall be unlawful for any person owning or having under his control a dead animal to permit such dead animal to remain unburied for a period in excess of 24 hours. Failure to comply may results in the county charging owner or personal in control to dispose of carcass. (§8.08.350 and 8.08.370)

**Sutter County** – No specific county ordinances on record.

**Yuba County** – The Health Officer can order animal control to remove a dead animal from any private property at the cost of the property or animal owner. (§8.05.250)

### **Procedures for On-site Burial of Livestock on Rangeland Operation**

These procedures apply only if there are no local prohibitions or regulations. Additionally, on-site burial of animals must have died on the owner's property and will be buried on the same property, no off-site transportation. This is the most least desired option, but it is recognized in remote locations on-site burial may be the only method available. Unconsolidated waste buried in this matter not only poses a risk to water quality, but also can affect future use of your property. Procedures for onsite burial include:

- Burial should take place more than 150 feet downslope of nearest domestic well.
- Burial should not be near streams, swales, ponds or in saturated soils.
- Carcass should be buried in a shallow trench and if available apply lime to the carcass. Excavate at least 7 feet to allow 5 feet of soil cover. Do not put carcass on soil surface and mound soil.
- Keep a record on-site of animals buried, depth of pit, depth of cover and location on property.
- Do not irrigate over the disposal pits.
- Do not bury an animal where you may intend to build a structure in the future.

### **Licensed Transporters in Region**

The following companies are licensed (*as of Summer 2021*) by the California Department of Food and Agriculture to haul carcasses in Northern California. Please contact for availability and pricing.

**One Last Ride, Oroville - 530-990-2231 text or call Tina**  
**Into the Sunset, Chico - 530-570-8859 text or call Andrea**  
**Animal Carcass Removal - 530-575-1985 call Shelly**  
**Round The Clock Livestock Removal -530-917-9526**

### **References**

- Batarseh, P. 2019. California Department of Food and Agriculture. Personal Communication.  
California Environmental Protection Agency. 2006. Emergency Animal Disposal Guidance.  
Poroli, B. 2019. CalRecycle. Personal Communication  
Snyder, C. and Letton. B. 2019. Regional Water Quality Control Board. Personal Communication.