

The Farrier's Corner: by Ray and Michelle Smith

Disposal of Livestock Carcasses

This isn't a pleasant subject, yet it is a necessary conversation to have. If you own livestock, you will eventually have to face the issue of animal mortality. The death of large livestock presents a challenging situation. Adult horses may weigh from 900 to well over 1,000 pounds. How do you legally and safely dispose of something so large?

While some deaths are expected or even planned, sudden deaths often leave owners in shock and at a loss for a disposal plan. Regardless of the age or health status of your horse, a little pre-planning can save a great deal of confusion and trauma later. What disposal options

are available in the state of Oregon? If you own property, you may bury livestock on your property if you follow certain rules. According to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), individual burials of large animals must meet three criteria:

1. The bottom of the burial hole must be dry and the carcass must be covered with hydrated lime.
2. Carcasses must be buried at least 500 feet from surface water or wells.
3. Four feet of soil must be piled atop the burial to allow for settling.

If you decide to bury on your own land, you will either have to dig the hole yourself or hire it done. It is easier to dig a livestock-sized hole with equipment than with a shovel, especially in frozen or very dry soil. The hole

should be approximately 9 feet deep and large enough to accommodate the body. If you do not own equipment, call around ahead of time to locate contractors or neighbors who are qualified and willing to do this work should the need arise. Check on rates and availability. If your equipment operator does not work on weekends, have a backup plan. Most difficult situations do not happen at convenient times.

If you don't have adequate land to dispose of the animal, there is the option of an animal disposal service. Animal Disposal of Southern Oregon is based in Eagle Point and provides service to various communities including the Illinois Valley. They have a good reputation for being fast, efficient and very courteous.

Incineration in Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) approved incinerators is an acceptable method of disposal for carcasses in Oregon. Commercial cremation services for horses do exist, although they are not common. Tualatin Oregon is home to Dignified Pet Services which provides whole body equine cremation. They are listed as a state-of-the-art

facility and the only such facility on the west coast. They will provide transportation to their facility via a specially designed trailer. Rates for cremation at their facility range from \$950 (minis) to \$1,900 (drafts). Saddle horses are cremated for \$1,600. These fees include transportation from within a 30 mile radius of the facility. Transport from over 30 miles away is charged at \$5/mile one way. They provide services throughout the Pacific Northwest including central Oregon and the Oregon coast.

According to their website, equine cremation requires approximately 24 hours and renders roughly 40 pounds of ashes. These ashes are environmentally safe and are, of course, returned to the owner.

Animals cannot be openly burned except in cases of pathogen or disease emergencies. This type of burning is authorized by the ODA.

A more unusual option for those with acreage is whole animal composting. Granted, this sounds a bit unsavory. However, when done properly it is considered an environmentally safe and reliable way to recycle the nutrients of the carcass.

In Oregon, one must have a composting plan on file with the ODA. You may also be required to acquire a permit from the DEQ. Considerable information is available regarding whole animal composting. Brochures have been produced by the University of Minnesota, The New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service and Cornell Waste Management Institute to name a few.

Natural Disposal/Intentional Consumption by Scavengers is another acceptable method of disposal given certain guidelines. According to ODA information, this method is acceptable for single carcasses if the carcass is located a one-half mile from any dwelling and a one-fourth mile from an open waterway. If your animal was euthanized by chemical injection, this is not a viable option as the euthanasia drugs pose risks to foraging scavengers.

This method is most suitable for large private acreages such as ranches. Dumping dead domestic animals on public lands is not legal. It is also not allowable to leave domestic animal carcasses within a one-half mile of a dwelling or within a one-fourth mile of running

streams or waterways for longer than 15 hours before legal disposal (ORS 601.140).

Here in the Illinois Valley we have a wild cat park. While they do accept live, reasonably healthy horses for meat, they do not accept deceased animals. Do not deliver dead horses to Great Cats World Park.

Some Oregon landfills will accept animal carcasses. Always check ahead to verify that the landfill is currently accepting carcasses and inquire about the fee. Most landfills will charge approximately \$80 to \$150 per carcass. Landfills currently listed online as accepting livestock carcasses are located in: Enterprise, Baker City, Corvallis, Arlington, Pineville, Boardman, Eugene, Roseburg and The Dalles.

While it is often painful and difficult to deal with the loss of a horse, we hope that this article will at least help owners to prepare for the eventuality.

We are not lawyers and no part of this article should be construed as legal advice. For questions regarding legal issues surrounding livestock carcass disposal please contact an appropriate state agency such as the ODA.

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