



Animal Disposal Following a Flood

Following are answers to frequently asked questions about disposal of dead animals after a natural disaster. Should you have further questions, please contact your local health department.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are dead animals a health concern?

As dead animals decompose, bacteria that may normally be contained within the animal's body can be released, exposing people to potential disease-causing pathogens.

Scavengers and rodents may be attracted to the carcasses, so it is important to remove the carcass as soon as possible. Rats in particular may carry some diseases of concern.

What can I do to reduce my health risk?

The risk to people from animal carcasses is low if proper precautions are taken.

- Proper hand washing can prevent infection with certain pathogens that may be transmitted from animals, including *Salmonella* and *E. coli*.
- Secure all food sources and remove any animal carcasses to avoid attracting rats and other scavenging animals.
- Follow the guidelines below for disposal of animal carcasses.

How do I dispose of a dead animal on my property during flood cleanup?

The owner of the dead animal must properly dispose of the animal carcass. If the owner cannot be identified, then the owner of the property on which the dead animal is found is responsible for disposal.

- Dispose of the dead animal within 72 hours of discovery, if possible.
- Dispose of the dead animal so it does not become a public nuisance or cause pollution of surface or ground water.
- Use burial, landfilling, incineration, composting, rendering, or another method *approved by the local health officer* that is not otherwise prohibited by federal, state, or local law or regulation. To get information on approved methods of animal disposal in your area, contact your local health department.
- Burial is not appropriate in flooded areas because it may not be possible to bury the animal a sufficient distance from ground water. Additionally, regulations limit the number of animals that can be buried on a given area of land. Mass burial of carcasses is not allowed.

Landfilling

Small animals can be placed in the regular outdoor trash container to be hauled away to a landfill.

Use personal protection when collecting dead animals.

- Avoid direct contact with any dead animal.
- Wear gloves and use a shovel when possible while removing carcass.
- Cover your gloved hand with a plastic bag, pick up the remains, then invert the plastic bag over the remains and seal the bag, or
- Use a shovel to place remains inside a plastic trash bag, then rinse the shovel with water.
- Place the bagged animal in an outdoor trash container that is secured from access by children and animals.
- Avoid splashing contaminated water and dead animal body fluids into your eyes, mouth, or nose.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after removing the carcass and after handling any debris in clean-up activities after a flood.

In areas severely affected by the flooding, before placing dead animals in your trash container, be sure that your trash will be picked-up on the regular schedule. If trash pickup is delayed, contact your local health department to locate solid waste drop-off sites.

For large animals (such as cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and swine), call your local health department or solid waste utility to see if they will accept large animal carcasses. The local health department may have set up special provisions to collect dead animals.

Burial

If you have determined that burial is an appropriate method, be sure every part of the carcass is covered by at least three feet of soil; at a location not less than 100 feet from any well, spring, stream, or other surface waters; not in a low-lying area subject to seasonal flooding or within a 100-year flood plain; and not in a way likely to contaminate ground water. It is best to coordinate with your local health department before burying animal carcasses.

I am a farmer and I lost livestock during the flood. How do I dispose of a large animal or multiple animal remains?

Contact your local health department to see if special provisions have been set up for collection of dead livestock. Let them know you need assistance with collection and disposal of a large number of livestock animals.

Additional Information

Washington State Department of Health, Storm and Flood Information:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov>

Disposal of dead animal, WAC 246-203-100:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=246-203-121>

CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response - Flood covers personal health and safety during and after flooding: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>