



Disposing of Animal Carcasses Left Behind by a Declared Disaster

Here we give tips for dealing with a difficult issue sometimes encountered after a natural or human-caused disaster such as a hurricane, flood, tornado, fire, or explosion, etc.—the safe and proper disposal of carcasses of large animals.

As you return to your property after such an event – even with all the other burdens from this disaster – one of your most important tasks will be to properly dispose of the carcasses of animals that died.

Who is responsible for properly disposing of carcasses?

If you own the land or operate a farm or other facility on it, you are responsible for properly disposing of the carcasses of animals killed in a disaster. It's important to do so quickly but you must also:

- Protect public health and safety.
- Avoid creating a nuisance.
- Prevent the spread of disease.
- Prevent adverse effects on water quality.

Remember: Health and Safety First!

What are my options?

After a storm, hurricane, tornado, etc., your immediate options for disposing of carcasses might be limited:

- Take them to a landfill that can accept them.
- Bury them on your property.

Landfilling carcasses

One of the preferred ways to dispose of animal carcasses is as special waste in an appropriately designed landfill—in legal terms, a Type I or Type I AE landfill that also meets the provisions of Title 30 (30 TAC), Section 330.171(c)(2).

Find a landfill near you in [Active Municipal Solid Waste Landfills GI-611](#).¹

¹ www.tceq.texas.gov/downloads/permitting/waste-permits/publications/gi-611-active-msw-landfills.pdf

Burying carcasses on your property

You may bury carcasses on your own property if you follow these requirements:

1. Ten or more carcasses? Call us!

If you plan to bury 10 or more carcasses, call the [TCEQ regional office](#)² that serves your county and ask for guidance.

2. Before you dig, get the utilities marked.

Before you even look for a good burial site, call one of these hotlines:

- 811 (Texas811) (see www.call811.com)
- 800-344-8377 (Dig Tess)
- 800-545-6005 (Texas One Call)

They will send a worker to your property to mark the gas and other buried utility lines.

3. Find the safest burial site.

It should meet all these requirements:

- Unlikely to be disturbed in the near future.
- At least 50 feet from the nearest creek, stream, pond, lake, or river and far enough from standing water, flowing water, or groundwater to prevent its contamination.
- At least 50 feet from the nearest public water well, 150ft from the nearest private water well.
- At least 50 feet from adjacent property lines; 200 feet is recommended.
- Sloped enough for good drainage.

4. Don't dig yet! Look again carefully!

Find a different site if any of the following is true of the one you have chosen:

- Has a high water-table.
- Has permeable soil.
- Is in a 100-year floodplain.

These locations do not provide sufficient protection to groundwater and streams.

5. Now you can dig.

Make your pit or trench 3 to 5 feet deep—but not so deep as to risk the walls caving in.

² www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/directory/region

6. Cover the carcasses the same day.

Put the dead animals in the pit or trench and to prevent odors and vectors cover them the same day with at least 3 feet of soil.

7. Document the location.

To comply with environmental rules, you will need to be able to document the location of the burial. Either of these methods is sufficient:

- The GPS coordinates of the burial site. Many mobile phones and other devices can quickly give you this information.
- A metes and bounds description. This is a specific description of the burial site based on the legal description of your lot—for example, 500 feet north and 2000 feet west of SE corner of Section 55.

Documenting burial supports a claim of loss

Assuming that the buried carcasses were livestock, consider the ways you can offset the losses associated with their death:

- You might be able to file a claim with your insurance company.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers assistance to offset losses from declared disasters.
- You could declare the loss for an income tax deduction.

Visit the [FEMA website](https://www.fema.gov/)³ or contact your local Farm Services Agency office to inquire about the [USDA's disaster assistance program](https://www.usda.gov/topics/disaster-resource-center)⁴ and the type of burial or disposal documentation required for that assistance.

Environmental rules for deed recording

Whenever animal carcasses are buried, state environmental rules require that the event be recorded in the property deed. You will complete this process, called deed recording, at the county courthouse.

Deed recording is not required before you bury the animals. Bury them and take care of the other pressing concerns with your family and your property. You may take care of the deed requirements after the emergency conditions are over.

Deed recording is not always required

You do not have to complete deed recording in these instances:

- If the property where the carcasses were buried has a certified water quality management plan (WQMP).
- If, in this situation, you buried fewer than 10 carcasses on any one property.

³ www.fema.gov/

⁴ www.usda.gov/topics/disaster-resource-center

Need help or advice? Call us!

At the TCEQ regional office that serves your county, we can answer your questions or help you find the help you need. We can give you information that is specific to this situation, help ensure that the disposal protects public health and safety and help you with the requirements for any needed deed recording.

Find out how to [contact the TCEQ regional office](#)⁵ that serves your county.

Remember: Before you bury 10 or more carcasses on your property, you must first call your regional office.

Final notes

This is a guide, not the rules

This document is intended to identify the requirements for the disposal of animal carcasses during the aftermath of a disaster. It does not supersede or replace any state or federal law, regulation, or rule. It is the responsibility of the owner to be knowledgeable and to remain abreast of guideline or regulation developments.

Find more information online

You can find more information on our [Response webpages](#)⁶

⁵ www.tceq.texas.gov/agency/directory/region

⁶ www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/response