

MANAGEMENT OF FARM WASTES, MORTALITIES AND HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS

Why should you be concerned?

Improper handling, storage or disposal of farm wastes, including those from the household, may create an environmental or health risk for you, your family, or your livestock and pets. Examples of wastes that require special care include:

- Livestock mortalities
- Livestock health care products (e.g. drugs, disinfectants, detergents, sanitizers, used syringes, used scalpel blades)
- Chemicals or chemical packaging and containers (e.g. antifreeze, lubricants such as grease or oil, paints, preservatives, solvents, fuels)
- Household wastewater
- Milkhouse and equine ranch bulk tank centre washwater

Improper disposal of livestock mortalities can negatively affect soil and water quality, and may pose a disease risk for people or other livestock. Scavengers that have direct access to carcasses, for example, may transfer pathogens from dead livestock. All mortalities must be stored and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner in accordance with the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation. According to the Regulation, there are four acceptable methods which can be used to dispose of livestock mortalities:

- Composting
- Rendering
- Burial
- Incineration

In order to comply with the Regulation, deadstock disposal areas must:

- Prevent access by pets and wildlife; and
- Prevent contamination of groundwater and surface water.

In dairy and equine ranch operations, washwater generated in the milkhouse and urine tank centre typically contains nutrients, detergents, sanitizers and bacteria that may pose a risk to soil, groundwater or surface water. Dairy and equine ranch operators should consult with Manitoba Conservation, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and/or local municipalities to ensure milkhouse and equine ranch bulk tank centre washwater handling and disposal systems are designed properly and that all regulatory requirements are being met. Washwater that contains urine or feces is considered 'manure' under the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation, and must be handled accordingly.

Other farm and household wastes, particularly chemicals, pharmaceutical products and associated packaging, are especially hazardous to soil, water and animals if they are not handled, stored or disposed of properly. Pouring chemicals down drains, onto the ground or leaving them exposed outdoors, even inside original containers, are not responsible waste management practices. Proper storage and disposal methods must be followed.

Parts or entire pieces of equipment that cannot be reused or recycled must be disposed of properly. Onsite burial or stockpiling of these wastes is not appropriate. These disposal methods may not only be in violation of environmental regulations but can adversely affect soil, ground and surface water as the wastes deteriorate and break down.

Almost all farm homes use a septic tank or similar system to treat household wastewater on the farm. These systems are usually economical and reliable, but they must be designed properly in order to safely handle all the wastewater produced and prevent contamination of ground and surface water.

A properly designed private Onsite Wastewater Management System (OWMS) is an installation in compliance with Manitoba Conservation Environmental Standard. An OWMS must treat and dispose of sewage and wastewater effluent so they do not present a risk to public health or to the environment. The property owner may install an OWMS, but must submit a proposal or registration to Manitoba Conservation, receive authorization to proceed and have the system inspected before covering.

Over the years the legislative requirements for OWMS have changed. The current OWMS Regulation applies to new and existing systems. However, your OWMS, providing that it is working properly, does not necessarily have to be altered at this time. Contact Manitoba Conservation to ensure that your OWMS is in compliance with the Regulation and is being operated properly.

What can you do?

1. Meet or exceed the requirements for livestock mortality management as specified in the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation.
2. If you are a dairy or equine ranch operator, properly design, operate and maintain a disposal system for milkhouse or equine ranch bulk tank centre washwater and minimize water use in your operation.
3. Handle, store and dispose of particularly hazardous wastes (e.g. chemicals) very cautiously, following local protocols where they exist or at a Household Hazardous Waste depot if one is scheduled in your area.
4. Reuse and recycle as much of the used materials and machinery parts as possible. Dispose of all other unrecoverable wastes properly, such as at a licenced or permitted landfill or transfer station.
5. Compost suitable organic and yard waste (vegetation and kitchen waste that will break down but not rot) that can then be used to fertilize fields or gardens.
6. Do not add wastes to on-farm dumps. If possible, determine what has been placed in an onsite dump and consider how any pollution risk that may exist can be reduced, including the possibility of transferring wastes to a waste disposal ground.
7. Dispose of household wastewater in an approved OWMS. It is illegal to dispose of livestock manure (including dairy or equine ranch washwater that contains feces or urine) through the OWMS.
8. Make sure your OWMS is large enough to accommodate the maximum expected daily volume of sewage. Look for ways to reduce the amount of wastewater that enters the septic system.
9. Protect your health and the quality of your drinking water by ensuring the OWMS is maintained and operated within the design parameters.
10. Keep your OWMS in good repair. The septic tank should be inspected for required cleaning at intervals of no more than 2 years to determine scum and sludge accumulation. Additional cleaning may be required if an in-sink garburator is used.
11. Know and understand the legislation that pertains to management of farm wastes, mortalities and hazardous products. Manage your operation to meet and if possible, exceed legislation.
12. Use this worksheet to evaluate how well farm and household wastes are managed in your operation.
13. Contact your local GO Office for additional information and support, or other appropriate agricultural extension specialist.