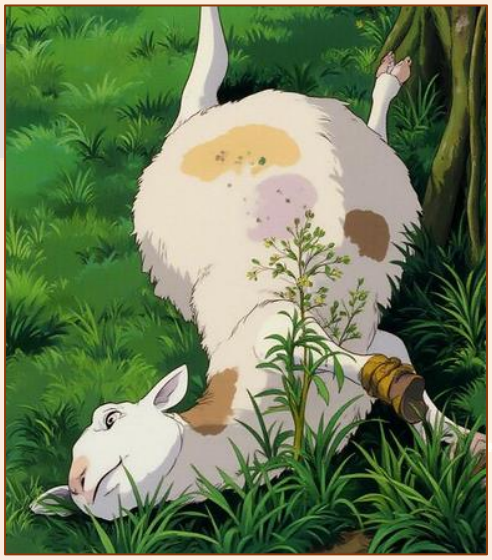
GETTING RID OF DEAD ANIMALS

and other waste products

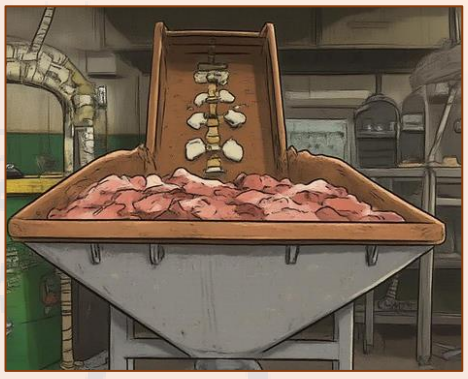


There's a saying, "where there are livestock, there are 'deadstock'." Death is a normal part of any animal production enterprise. Dead animals and other waste materials (e.g., afterbirth and slaughter wastes) can be a risk to biosecurity and hazardous to the environment. They need to be disposed of in a proper manner to minimize soil and water contamination and the risk of spreading diseases and attracting wildlife. Every sheep and goat farm/ranch needs to have a plan for disposal.

Laws pertaining to the disposal of animal mortality vary by location and species. Be sure to follow the laws of your county, province, and/or state. Depending upon location, disposal options may include incinerating, landfills, burial, rendering, and composting.

Burial is still a common method of disposal, but it is becoming less preferred due to the potential for water pollution. Burial involves digging a hole, filling it with the dead animal, and covering it with soil. Eventually the carcass will decay. Regulations usually dictate how deep the animal needs to be buried and how far away it is from sensitive areas. In cold climates, burial is difficult if the ground is frozen. An option is to cover the carcass with manure until the ground thaws.

Composting is a preferred method of on-farm dead stock disposal. It is an aerobic biodegradation process used to decompose organic material. Composting transforms a waste product, such as animal carcasses (and manure), into a useful soil amendment, that can be spread on agricultural land. To make composting work, you need to create and maintain an ideal environment for microorganisms to function in your pile. There are four essential elements for successful composting: 1) carbon and nitrogen; 2) oxygen; 3) moisture; and 4) temperature. The ideal carbon to nitrogen ratio (C:N) is generally between 25:1 and 30:1. You need to select an appropriate place for your compost pile, away from sensitive water sources.



If available, incinerating and rendering are other options for dead animal disposal. Rendering recycles the nutrients contained in dead animals into something useful, e.g., feed. Incinerating uses high temperatures to reduce the carcass to ashes. The remains of pet sheep/goats can be taken to pet crematoriums for communal or individual cremation.

Never leave animal carcasses (or parts) or other waste products around or drag them to the woods for scavengers to find.

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