

ABSTRACT

National Symposium on Carcass Disposal

A BETTER METHOD FOR BURYING ANIMAL CARCASSES

by

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Burial has been one of the most common methods for the disposal of animal carcasses in Maine in the past. Typically, holes were excavated 5 feet deep or deeper and mass graves were common practice. The primary goal was to dispose of carcasses and prevent the spread of disease. Investigations into some of these burial sites, however, have shown that deeply buried carcasses do not readily decompose and often take place in the groundwater table. Maine now recommends composting for many carcass disposal situations, particularly if large carcasses or large volumes of carcasses are involved. Composting though, is not always a practical carcass disposal solution and other methods such as incineration or rendering can be quite costly or unavailable. The Maine State Soil Scientist has developed a burial technique that not only prevents the spread of disease and protects ground and surface waters but also encourages decomposition so that burial sites can be reused. The technique, which often requires site modification, utilizes shallow and narrow trenches with no more than a 24" thickness of carcasses. If reuse is a priority, sites usually require construction with imported sandy textured fill material for maximum decomposition rates. At least 50 of these burial sites have been designed and installed in the state in the past 20 years. They have been developed for a range uses from animal shelters to municipalities with roadkill disposal needs to slaughterhouse wastes and even dairy farms. Their best application though, appears to be for animal carcasses weighing 100 lbs. or less, particularly for sites where reuse is important.

If burial is to be one of the options in the carcass disposal toolbox, this approach will allow it to be done in a cost effective and environmentally safe manner. One happy user figures they have saved over \$70,000 with their constructed burial site over 14 years of use. This talk will cover the principles behind the design as well as basic design considerations and will include a few real life experiences.