

## **Disposing of Dead Animals**

Ravalli County Environmental Health (RCEH) regularly receives inquiries from people wondering how to safely and legally dispose of dead animals. After making a few phone calls and reviewing the relevant statutes, we came up with the following guidelines for people who have a dead animal to dispose of. It should be noted that these guidelines are recommended for the disposal of one, or a few number, of dead animals and are not meant to provide guidance for human remains nor facilities such as rendering plants, slaughterhouses, meat packing houses, meat depots, etc.

### **First, let's be clear with what you cannot do:**

- You cannot dispose of an animal via open burning, except in the rare case of a disease outbreak in which burning is determined to be the best measure to prevent the spread of the disease. In such a case, you would need special permission from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ).
- You can't dump or leave the carcass in, upon or within 200 feet of any highway, road, street, alley or public property in Montana.
- You can't dump or leave any dead animal on privately owned property where hunting, fishing, or other recreation is permitted, unless the property is legally permitted by MT DEQ to accept and manage solid waste.
- You cannot place all or any part of a dead animal in any lake, river, creek, pond, or reservoir, road, street, alley, lot, or field; or allow a dead animal to contaminate any surface water or groundwater.
- You cannot place all or any part of a dead animal within 1 mile of a residence unless it is buried at least 2 feet underground.
- You cannot allow carcasses to remain on the ground surface so as to become a public nuisance or a menace to livestock or poultry.
- You cannot dispose of a dead animal in any Bitter Root Disposal waste container.

### **Now, here's what you can do:**

#### ***BURIAL***

You may bury a dead animal at least 2 feet underground *on your own property*, provided the site is not in an area of high ground water. The activity of dumping or burying waste on any property other than your own is prohibited unless the property is permitted [by MT DEQ] to receive such waste – because it is solid waste management. While not specifically addressed by Ravalli County or Montana State law, we recommend a few common-sense rules and recommendations when burying dead animals:

- It is recommended that dead animals be buried greater than 4 feet from the natural surface of the ground, covered with quicklime and then 4 feet of earth.
- Burial sites should be located greater than 500 feet away from any occupied or inhabitable building.
- Burial sites should be located greater than 150 feet away from any surface water, including ephemeral or intermittent drainages and wetlands.
- Burial sites should be located greater than 100 feet away from any drinking water supply source, preferably downhill from any well. A greater distance is recommended where conditions might increase the likelihood of contamination of a drinking water source.
- Burial sites should not be located on slopes greater than 12%.
- Burial sites should not be in an area where seasonally high ground water is 6 ft or less below ground surface or inside the 100 year flood plain. Please contact RCEH if unsure.
- Sites with shallow bedrock or many stone layers at a shallow depth should be avoided.
- Don't place dead animals where they might attract neighboring dogs.
- Don't place animals where the wind might carry the odor of decomposition to neighbors – such an act would constitute a public nuisance.

## ***LANDFILL***

You can take any dead animal to the landfill in Missoula where you will be charged \$36.75 per large animal (cows, horses, llamas, mules) or \$14.90 per small animal (dogs, cats, goats, sheep, etc.). Call the landfill to arrange drop-off (before 2pm) at (406) 728-9572. The Victor Transfer Station will not take dead animals. (Updated April 2011)

## ***INCINERATION***

You can have your pets and other animals cremated at Bitterroot Pet Crematorium at 817 South Shoshone Loop, off Skalkaho Highway. They charge from \$75 to \$95 to cremate the animal, depending on the size, and they will pick up the carcass for \$30. Call (406) 363-1650 for information about their services. As well, most veterinary clinics in Missoula and Ravalli County offer drop-off service for cremation and/or disposal. (Updated April 2011)

## ***AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS***

If you have an agriculture operation of more than five acres, you do not have to be licensed to manage your own solid waste (e.g. dead animals) on-site. You may legally dispose of your own dead animals as long as the disposal does not create a nuisance or public health hazard or violate the laws governing the disposal of hazardous substances. The aforementioned disposal restrictions, setbacks, and prohibitions were developed to minimize the 'nuisance and public health hazard' issues related to improper waste disposal. Therefore, adherence to the standards for disposal is, at the very least, strongly recommended, since failure to follow such standards may (likely) result in the creation of a nuisance, public health hazard, or both, when it comes to the disposition of dead animals. As mentioned previously, you *cannot* dispose of an animal via open burning because that would be in violation of the Clean Air Act. It should also be noted that if you bring in animals from other locations to be buried on your farm you may be subject to additional disposal regulations and permitting requirements. Please contact the MT DEQ before burying dead animals on your property if the animals did not originate from your farm.

## **Roadkill Wildlife:**

- State Highways (e.g. Hwy 93, Eastside Hwy, Skalkaho Hwy): Removal and disposal of roadkill animals on a state highway is usually the responsibility the Department of Transportation; they can be reached at (406) 523-5800.
- County Roads: Unfortunately the Ravalli County Road and Bridge Department does not have the resources to pick-up, remove, or dispose of dead animals. (There is no solid waste law or rule that requires the removal of roadkill animals from the side of the highway or road - where they end up after they are hit is not considered "disposal". However, once you pick it up, you own it.)

## **Relevant Statutes:**

Montana Code Annotated : 75-10-212 ; 75-10-213 ; 75-10-214 ; 75-5-605

Administrative Rules of Montana : 17.8.604 ; 32.3.125 ; 32.4.1002 ; 32.6.1102 ; 17.50.809

For further questions or concerns, please feel free to call or visit

**Ravalli County Environmental Health (RCEH)**

215 South 4th St, Suite D, Hamilton, MT 59840

Telephone: (406) 375-6565

OR

**Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ)**

Permitting and Compliance Division – Solid Waste Section

Telephone: (406) 444-4323