

4 Easy Steps for Composting Dead Livestock

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Site Selection

- Consider depth to groundwater and location to surface water when choosing a site.
- Loamy or clayey soils are preferred as a natural base to slow permeability through leaching.

Material

- **Base material:** straw, old hay, coarse crop residues (corn stalks)
 - The base is used to create airflow for composting as well as absorb leachate from the decomposition process.
- **Bulking material:** manure or spoiled fermented feedstuffs
 - Bulking material aids in starting the decomposition process, with active microbes being present.
- **Cover material:** straw, old hay, sawdust
 - The cover keeps the heat inside, protects the pile, prevents odor issues and deters scavengers.



Step 1

Place 2 feet of base material in pile or long row, depending on number of dead livestock to be composted.



Step 2

Lay dead livestock on top of base. Have at least 1 foot of base material between perimeter of dead livestock and edge of base.

Step 3

Cover dead livestock with 8 to 10 inches of bulking material.



Step 4

Cover the entire pile or long row with 2 feet of cover material.



Things To Remember

- A dome-shaped pile helps with moisture management.
- Small-sized dead livestock can be layered next to or stacked on top of one another given there is bulking material between them so they are not touching.
 - If composting ruminants, puncture the rumen to prevent it from exploding.
- Make sure pile always has sufficient cover material, especially when turning, to keep bulking material and dead livestock covered.
- Turn pile every six months from early spring to late fall.
- To accelerate composting, turn pile every two months from early spring to late fall.
- Existing compost can be used to cover new piles or long rows.
 - Screen/sort any remaining bones out of the compost before spreading to prevent puncturing equipment tires.

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750-12-21, 500-3-17, 500-12-15