

Tips & Tools

- **Always** check your town ordinances in advance: some towns prohibit burial or composting.
- Discuss euthanasia options in advance with your veterinarian.
- **Always** be very aware of wells, surface water, public areas and property lines. Also consider if seasonal water will be an issue: often different times of the year will cause water tables to rise.
- If composting or burying, take steps to ensure local wildlife or dogs cannot access the carcass.
- **Always** consult with a veterinarian if your horse dies from an unknown cause.
- In the event of large scale emergencies or disasters, consult with local and state authorities as needed: Any mass casualty event from biohazards will require special handling.
- **Do not attempt to compost** a carcass unless you have familiarized yourself with the process. Please consult articles noted by Texas A&M University and Iowa State University, which can be found on the CHC website.
- Carcasses should be disposed of within 24 hours to prevent them from being deemed a public health threat.
- Consider your options well in advance, and make plans for different seasons: for example it may be impossible to bury a carcass during the winter due to frozen ground.

Additional Resources

****Please be aware that this brochure is meant as a guideline only and should not be construed as veterinary, environmental or legal advice. CHC strongly urges horse owners to contact the various groups and agencies below for additional information.**

Texas A&M University composting paper
amarillo.tamu.edu/~bauvermann/RefereedandEdited/designutilization.pdf

Iowa State University model guidelines
www3.abe.iastate.edu/cattlecomposting/guidelines/draft_guidelines.asp

Maine Composting School
www.composting.org 207-832-0343

Dept of Environmental Protection (DEP)
waste management www.ct.gov/dep
860-424-3000

Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association
www.ctvet.org 860-635-7770

Connecticut Department of Agriculture
860-713-2569 www.ct.gov/doag

Connecticut State Veterinarian 860-713-2505
www.ct.gov/doag

Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab: www.pathobiology.uconn.edu/cvmdl
860-486-3738

Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/animals

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov 203-389-6925

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Carcass Disposal

The Connecticut Horse Council, Inc.



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Many people do not like to consider that eventually their horses may need to be euthanized. It is a sad fact of life, and one that should be planned for and not ignored. Waiting until you are faced with the death of your horse will force you to make very difficult decisions during an emotional time. Planning in advance will help alleviate stress, and prevent problems with local and state authorities.

Specific Issues

State laws, town ordinances and agency regulations primarily govern disposal of large animal carcasses in Connecticut. It is advisable to check with your town hall to determine which procedure is prohibited or permitted in your town. Under state statute it is generally not illegal to bury or compost a horse carcass; however town ordinances and agency regulations will apply to individual situations.

****Special Note:** any declared disaster, biohazard, disease outbreak, mass casualty event, or large scale emergency often overrides town and state laws. Therefore it is imperative that you consult with local emergency officials or the state veterinarian before you attempt to dispose of a carcass during those times.

Carcasses should be disposed of within 24 hours in order to prevent them from becoming a public health threat.

Burial

If you must bury a horse, make sure it is not near wells or streams, so that you do not inadvertently contaminate water supplies. Take precautions so that barn dogs or local wildlife cannot dig up the carcass. According to Connecticut public health regulations regarding carcass disposal; burial should be at least 300 feet up gradient or 150 feet down

gradient from any well, at least 165 feet from a property line or public use area, and at least 100 feet from a water body, stream, or drainage way. Again, be aware of your town ordinances and regulations, as they govern whether or not burial is permitted.

Composting

It is possible to compost a large animal carcass. Extensive studies have been done by several universities using different methods. In fact, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) waste management division considers composting of carcasses a viable disposal option, provided that it is not prohibited by town ordinances, and that the composting is done in an appropriate fashion so as not to contaminate ground or surface water.

Be advised, that composting is a complex process and not merely a case of throwing manure over the body. As it is with burial, you must first take certain precautions to avoid contamination of water bodies, access to a carcass by wild animals, and determine if town ordinances prohibit composting.

Furthermore, composting will take longer than burial to fully break down a carcass—usually 6 to 9 months. Please consult with the Texas A&M and Iowa State University articles on the composting process to learn about proper compost procedures for carcasses. These are also located on the CHC website.

Incineration

Incineration of a carcass is another option; however, there are limited places in New England that will take large animal carcasses. Incinerating a large carcass should be undertaken by a facility that is equipped for it. It is inadvisable to attempt to simply burn a

carcass yourself, as the heat generated may not be enough to completely break down the body. Often, transportation to a facility is difficult, and the incineration process can be expensive. This is an option that definitely should be researched in advance if it is a choice that you would like to use.

Necropsy

In the event of death from an unknown cause, it is advisable to consult with your veterinarian. The Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab is able to provide necropsy services. A necropsy is the proper term for an animal autopsy. The necropsy will be conducted by veterinarians on staff at the lab, and a report on the cause of death will be issued to you. Once the necropsy is completed, the lab will dispose of the carcass.

Please note that the lab can only conduct necropsies on fresh carcasses, and this service should not be considered a generic form of carcass disposal. However, it is a viable option under certain circumstances. Details and contact information for this service can be found on the reverse of this brochure as well as the CHC website.

Conclusion

Dealing with the disposal of your horse's body can be very unpleasant, but it is a necessary part of being a horse owner. Ultimately, the method you choose will depend on several factors including expense, public health, feasibility and emotional preferences. The plans you make now can prevent problems and regrets in the future.

Regardless of the method of disposal used, make certain you have all the facts and information first.