



Producer Information Sheet

Emergency Response Procedures—Depopulation and Disposal

As part of its mission to protect American agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) responds to serious diseases if they are found in the U.S. livestock and poultry populations. Highly contagious diseases such as avian influenza, classical swine fever, Newcastle disease, and foot-and-mouth disease would cause significant losses and damage if they became established in our country's animal populations. APHIS responds quickly and decisively to any U.S. detections of these diseases.

Depopulation

Federal law gives APHIS the authority to depopulate affected herds and flocks to contain or stop the spread of the disease. Unfortunately, this is a necessary step when facing serious and highly contagious animal disease outbreaks.

Animal health officials consider many factors when determining the most appropriate method of depopulation. These include, but are not limited to, the size and type of the animals being destroyed, their temperament, their familiarity with people, and their containment/housing facilities. The number of animals in the herd or flock and the location of the farm are also important to consider.

APHIS follows the recommendations outlined by the American Veterinary Medical Association and the World Organization for Animal Health whenever possible. The herd or flock will be depopulated as soon as practical using the best option available under the specific circumstances. During a large disease event, there might be a delay while waiting for appropriate resources and personnel to arrive onsite. Animals will continue to receive care up until depopulation occurs.

APHIS uses trained veterinarians, animal health technicians, and specialized contractors to complete depopulation activities. APHIS emphasizes keeping the responders safe while minimizing stress to the animals.

Disposal

The carcasses will be disposed of using one of several methods:

- in-house composting
- outdoor, onsite composting
- burial
- off-site composting
- landfill
- incineration

APHIS and State officials evaluate disposal options based on the size of the herd/flock, local conditions, and applicable laws/regulations. There are different timelines for each disposal option. It is extremely important to follow all steps as outlined by disposal experts to minimize the risk of disease spread during the disposal process.

Producer Responsibilities

APHIS seeks to engage producers and their employees wherever appropriate during the disease response process. APHIS recognizes this can be a difficult time for all involved and will do everything it can to help producers and their employees through the process.

Producers should talk to animal health officials about their level of involvement and how they can work together with responders. Anyone who works on the farm during these processes will need to wear appropriate personal protective equipment and follow strict biosecurity procedures, as outlined by the response team and/or the flock plan signed by the producer.

For More Information

If you have any questions about the depopulation and disposal processes, talk with the State or Federal animal health officials responding to the disease event in your area.