Potential Carbon Sources for Composting

Composting requires an optimum ratio of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and moisture in order for aerobic microorganisms to generate enough heat to inactivate the avian influenza virus. Poultry carcasses provide nitrogen; addition of water provides moisture; wood chips or other materials provide the carbon source and a permeable matrix for oxygen to enter the composting windrows.

The minimum amount of carbon to achieve proper temperatures is approximately 1.5 parts carbon to 1 part poultry carcasses. Although 3-inch wood chips can provide an ideal carbon source, they may become scarce or difficult to acquire in some regions during a response. However, there are many materials that can be used, as detailed in the table below. In addition to the materials in the table, corn stover, oat hulls, and sunflower seed hulls were successfully used in the spring response.