



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



ANIMAL CARCASS DISPOSAL BEST PRACTICES

Many public employees must handle the remains of a deceased animal at some point. The carcasses of an animal can present several potential hazards to those who must pick up and dispose of them. Tasks can include:

- Road kills of wildlife
- Deceased animals in traps
- Animal hoarding incidents
- Road kills of pets
- Deceased diseased animals
- Animal fighting incidents
- Dispatching injured animals
- Drowned animals in pools

The following best practices to protect public employees:

- Most situations that require the handling of animal remains are not emergencies. Employees have the time to identify hazards and plan the appropriate safeguards. Employees and supervisors must take the time to conduct a hazard assessment and assemble the equipment to do the job safely.
- Use tools and equipment to avoid directly handling the remains and the dead animal's body fluids (i.e., blood, urine, feces). If contact does occur, wash the skin area contacted with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment:
 - Rubber or nitrile gloves – double gloving with a second pair of rubber or cloth gloves may be added.
 - Protective eyewear – splashing or spraying animal fluids into the eyes is a low frequency-high risk hazard. Wearing safety glasses is a good practice.
- Deceased animals with no obvious signs of injury should be assumed to have died from disease. Most animal pathogens are not transferable to humans. However, pathogens such as E. coli or salmonella can be prevalent in animal carcasses and represent a hazard to employees. To address these potential hazards, the following precautions should be used whenever handling animal carcasses:
 - Wear protective gloves and eyewear. If the animal is large and could contact the employee's clothing, provide Tyvek® coveralls.
 - Use long-handled tools and lifting aids to minimize direct contact with the remains.
 - Be prepared with bags to hold the carcass.
 - Do not disturb remains with no obvious sign of injury AND show evidence of hemorrhaging at the mouth, nose, or anus. These conditions may indicate anthrax as a possible cause of the animal's death. Movement of the carcass could release disease-carrying spores into the environment. Immediately contact DEP Hotline (877-WARN-DEP) or your local health department.
- Carcasses may also carry insects and parasites that can injure or cause employees discomfort. Avoid contact with the dead animal's external parasites (i.e., fleas and ticks). If possible, spray the carcass with a flea & tick spray before handling it.
- Unpleasant smells and disturbing sights may be present. Vapor rub under the nose may help.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or an anti-bacterial product after handling a carcass, even though gloves were worn.
- Clean equipment in the field when possible to prevent bringing potential contaminants back to the shop. If you must perform the cleaning at the shop, the equipment may be decontaminated with hot soap and water or with a solution of one part bleach to 9 parts water. You may also consider disposable tools for handling the carcass.

The disposal of the carcass can include composting, burying, or incineration. If the carcass is to be transported to a disposal facility, it should be placed in a plastic bag and sealed as soon as possible. If a zoonotic disease is suspected (i.e., rabies, tularemia), it is recommended to double-bag the carcass.

- Carcasses should not be buried within 5 feet of the seasonal high-water table or within 10 feet of bedrock. Do not bury carcasses in sandy or gravel soils to prevent groundwater impacts. The carcass must be completely covered with soil or wood chips. Bury a maximum of two carcasses per hole. There must be a separation distance of at least three feet from edge to edge of carcass burial locations. Consider disposal alternatives in areas of high pedestrian activity or other sensitive sites.
- Transport carcasses to a landfill for disposal.
- Incinerate carcasses at an approved facility.
- Transport the remains to approved wildlife refuge facilities for animal food use upon approval of the facility owner or operator.

It is illegal to take the head or antlers of a dead deer as a trophy.

Whenever there is an unusual mortality or die-off of wildlife, notify the DEP Hotline (877-WARN-DEP), or the local health department should be contacted to determine if a necropsy and disease investigation is warranted. The carcass(es) should be refrigerated as soon as possible until a decision is made as to its disposition. The Office of Fish and Wildlife Health and Forensics is especially interested in the following kinds of reports:

- Incidents involving the death of 5 or more animals except for game birds.
- Recurring deaths of animals in the same location over a period of time.
- Individual deer with symptoms that may indicate Chronic Wasting Disease (emaciation, listlessness, lowered head, drooping ears, excessive salivation, repetitive walking in set patterns).
- Incidents involving threatened or endangered species (www.njfishandwildlife.com/tandespp.htm), regardless of the cause of death or the number of animals involved.