

Landowner \_\_\_\_\_

## Handling Catastrophic Animal Losses (Burial Method)

### DEALING WITH CATASTROPHIC LOSSES

Mortality is a normal part of animal operations. Normal mortality should be addressed with composters or other appropriate carcass disposal methods. ***This job sheet addresses only catastrophic losses due to natural events. Catastrophic losses due to disease must be reported to the State Veterinarian and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).*** For assistance in dealing with normal mortality, contact your local NRCS or Conservation District office.

### BEFORE DISPOSAL BEGINS

Proper disposal of carcasses is important to prevent livestock disease transmission and to protect air and water quality. The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF) requires licensed confined animal feeding operations (CAFO's) and registered poultry feeding operations to have plans for handling losses of normal mortality and catastrophic losses. In the event of a catastrophic loss, ODAFF should be notified before beginning carcass disposal.

### METHODS OF DISPOSAL

There are various methods available for handling catastrophic losses - landfill, incineration, field composting, rendering, and burial are all acceptable methods of disposal. This job sheet describes the burial method of disposal. Not every method will work on every farm. Contact your local NRCS or Conservation District office to assist in finding out which methods could be used on your farm.

### Disposal by Burial

Burial of dead animals requires a backhoe or other trenching machine for construction of a pit in preparation of receiving carcasses.

### General considerations for using burial pits

- Do not locate the burial pit closer than 1 foot vertically above the flood plain; or the bottom of the burial pit within 2 feet of a water table or bedrock.
- Do not locate the burial pit within 300 feet of wells, springs, streams, neighboring residences, or public areas.
- Burial pit bottoms shall be relatively level. Length of burial pits may be limited by soil suitability and slope. If more than one pit is required, they shall be separated by a minimum of 3 feet of undisturbed or compacted clay soil.

- Do not locate the burial pit where surface water runoff could enter the pit.
- Do not locate the burial pit where soil erosion could deteriorate the pit or cover material.

### Using NRCS Soil Interpretations

Each local NRCS office maintains a listing of suitability for burial by map unit soil component. Each soil that is mapped in the county will fall into one of the following categories:

- **Not Limited** – Soils are adequate for burial. These are the preferred areas for locating burial pits.
- **Somewhat Limited** – Soils may be used for burial, as long as the limiting considerations are addressed.
- **Very Limited** – Soils are not adequate for burial. No burial pits may be constructed in these soils. Alternative methods of disposal will be required if these are the only available soils on the farm.

Site suitability for catastrophic loss pits must be completed in the field by NRCS personnel.

### PROCEDURES FOR USING BURIAL PITS

- Dig a trench at least four feet wide to a minimum depth of 3 feet. Maximum vertical trench wall is 4 feet. For trenches deeper than 4 feet vertical, the earthen wall shall be sloped back at 2 feet horizontal and 1 foot vertical.
- Begin placing animals in one end of the pit. One layer of carcasses will be followed with a minimum depth of soil equal to the carcass depth, not to exceed 3 layers of carcasses and covered with a minimum of 2 1/2 feet of soil above the last layer. For poultry, multiple layers of carcasses can be used, not to exceed two feet in thickness.
- As the animals begin to decay, it may be necessary to place additional soil material in areas that subside.
- Vegetate the fill areas or insure that vegetation establishes naturally.

### OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS

Not all soils located on a farm may be suited for burial without adequately addressing the limitations that prevent dead animals from being disposed by burial in an environmentally sound manner. The following limitations may be identified for your soils. Each limitation presented also lists procedures for overcoming those limitations. In

some cases, there may be multiple limitations that must be addressed for a given soil or location.

**Slope** – Overhead water must be diverted around the burial location by the use of short diversions.

**Depth to Rock** – The bottom of the pit must be kept shallow and adequate volume created by “mounding” of sidewalls above original ground elevation. Cover over carcasses must consist of a minimum of 2 1/2 feet of soil.

**Flooding** – Dikes must be installed to keep floodwaters out of burial area.

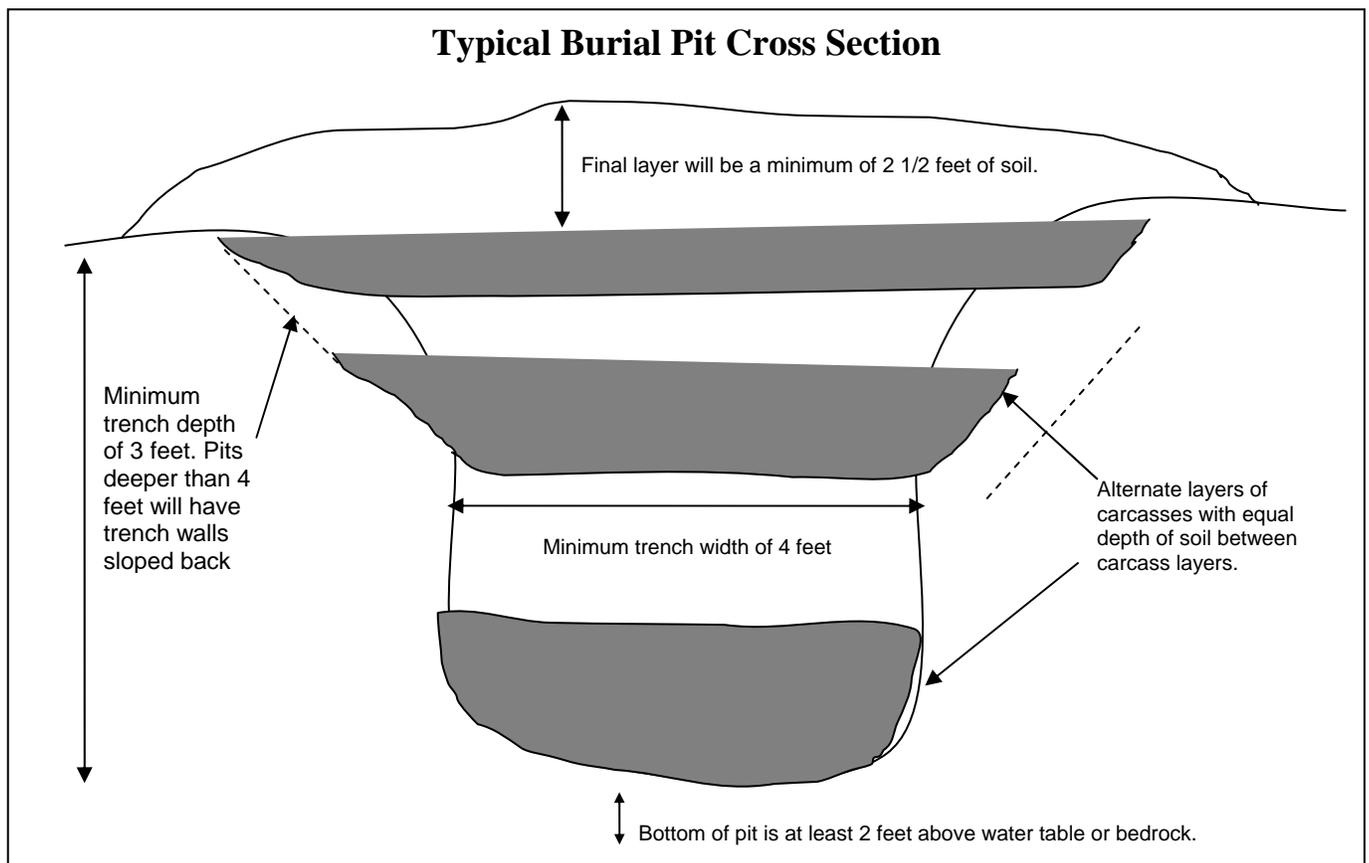
**Fragments or Stones** – There are no specific construction requirements to meet, but difficulty will be encountered during mechanical excavation of pit.

**Apparent Water Table** – Mounding, as listed in Depth to Rock.

**Perched Water Table** – There are various methods available for addressing perched water tables.

These include:

- Mounding, as listed in Depth to Rock.
- Providing drainage of the perched water table with perforated drainage pipe to open drainage ditches. (The integrity of the burial pit must be maintained and the pit, with its protective soil layer, must be left undisturbed with the installation of any drainage system.)
- Sealing off perched zones with compacted backfill.
- Using a 30 ml geosynthetic containment liner, overlapping at the top.



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