



County of Sonoma Department of Health Services
Environmental Health

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County of Sonoma Department of Health Services Public Advisory for Handling of Deceased Pets and Livestock

There are truly no words that can adequately describe the loss of a treasured companion animal. The loss of a pet can leave one in a profound state of grief. It is important to acknowledge and recognize the emotions, no matter how painful they may seem, in order to properly deal with the pet loss, and to move forward to healing.

If you find that your pet did not survive the fire, please refer to the guidelines outlined below to handle the remains of your pets in a manner that is safe and environmentally responsible.

How can I safely dispose of the remains of my pet?

- Wear gloves.
- Cover your gloved hand with a plastic trash bag, pick up the remains, then invert the trash bag over the remains and seal the bag.
- For larger animals, use a shovel to place remains inside a plastic trash bag, then rinse off the shovel with water.
- Place the sealed remains in any regular trash or recycling receptacle – even if the receptacle is damaged for removal from the property.
- You may choose to bury the animal(s) on your property. Take care to avoid digging near any water sources such as creeks, streams or ponds and avoid underground utility lines. If you do not know where the utility lines are located, check with your utility company before digging. Please place remains at an acceptable depth (~3 feet) so they are not disturbed during weather events such as a heavy rain.

Are there any special health risks I need to be aware of when disposing of pet remains?

- The risk to humans from animal remains is low if proper precautions are taken.
- Practice proper hand washing to prevent infection with certain pathogens that may be transmitted from farm animals, including *Salmonella* and *E. coli*. Please use soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, rinse under clean water and pat hands dry on a clean towel.
- Shower and wash hair thoroughly after handling carcass-contaminated materials.

How can I safely dispose of the remains of livestock?

- For livestock, it is usually the responsibility of the owner or person in charge of domesticated animals to appropriately dispose of dead animals in accordance with local or state ordinances within 24 hours after knowledge of the death.

Are there any special health risks I need to be aware of when disposing of livestock remains?

- The risk to humans from animal remains is low if proper precautions are taken.
- Practice proper hand washing to prevent infection with certain pathogens that may be transmitted from farm animals, including *Salmonella* and *E. coli*. Please use soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, rinse under clean water and pat hands dry on a clean towel.
- Shower and wash hair thoroughly after handling carcass-contaminated materials.

- Secure all food sources and remove any animal carcasses to avoid attracting rats.
 - People working to clean up areas containing swine or poultry carcasses should take the following precautions: Wear protective clothing, including waterproof gloves, waterproof boots, and protective eyewear (cover any open wounds).
 - Use duct tape to seal tops of gloves and boots to prevent water seepage.
 - Wear respiratory protection—an N-95 respirator or better.
- If you are entering a building that contains animal remains and smell hydrogen sulfide (a rotten egg smell), get out of the building and call your local fire department.
- Clean and disinfect all clothing and boots after handling carcass-contaminated materials.
- Wash work clothes separately from street clothes.

Related Links and Resources

Animal Disposal Following an Emergency

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/animaldisposal.html>

Emergency Animal Disposal Guidance

<https://calepa.ca.gov/disaster/animals/>