

EMERGENCY LOSSES

THIS CHAPTER WILL HELP PRODUCERS PREPARE FOR SUDDEN LARGE-SCALE LOSSES, BY ADDRESSING:

- possible causes and their implications for disposal options

- who to notify and call for service

- disposal options

- how to draft an emergency loss plan.

No livestock or poultry producer wants to foresee the day when all or a large number of animals die in an emergency situation. While it is human nature to avoid thinking about such a possibility, the fact remains that every year a number of producers in Ontario suddenly lose their entire herd or flock.

At the end of this chapter is a form for an emergency loss plan. Preparing this plan is your best ally in safe, efficient deadstock disposal after a crisis.

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF AN EMERGENCY LOSS

Emergency losses can result from a number of situations. A few of the more obvious causes are listed here.

BARN FIRE

Statistics from the Ontario Fire Marshal's office show that losses to farm properties in recent years ranged as follows:

- ▶ 2004 – 196 farm fires (\$30.1 million loss)
- ▶ 2005 – 223 farm fires (\$25.3 million loss)
- ▶ 2006 – 205 farm fires (\$34.4 million loss)
- ▶ 2007 – 241 farm fires (\$57.6 million loss).

When a barn fire is underway, of course the immediate concern is to do as much as possible to save the animals and property without risking human life. Because the suffering of animals in a fire may be very traumatic for producers, they may make irrational decisions in an attempt to save animals. Preplanning for a catastrophe of this nature is difficult, but may help to ensure that more rational decisions are made in the event of a fire.



Barn fires are a prime cause of emergency loss of livestock in Ontario.



Ventilation system failures during hot weather can lead to herd or flock loss.

SYSTEM FAILURE

Many of today's livestock and poultry barns rely heavily on automated systems for delivering feed, water and ventilation. Failure of these systems can very quickly lead to significant loss of livestock or poultry.

Ventilation systems are particularly critical, especially during hot weather. In many cases producers have only minutes to resolve a ventilation problem before animals or birds begin to die.

DISEASE

In recent years, other jurisdictions have dealt with the destruction and disposal of large numbers of livestock and poultry due to foreign animal diseases. In the United Kingdom, 12 million animals were destroyed and disposed of due to the foot-and-mouth outbreak. The Netherlands has dealt with both swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease since the late 1990s. In 2004, an outbreak of avian influenza in British Columbia infected 1.2 million birds and resulted in the culling of 18 million.

HEAT STRESS

Animals are adaptable to temperature changes. However, when changes occur suddenly there can be higher than average losses. This is particularly evident in the poultry and swine industries where sudden heat waves in the spring and summer months can result in a high level of deaths despite proper ventilation.

BARN COLLAPSE

Farm buildings collapse for various reasons. When climatic loading is exceeded (by wind, snow or ice), structures are compromised or destroyed. Buildings also collapse because of lack of maintenance or inadequate design.

Caution is needed when using equipment to clean up after a barn collapse or fire. Fully slatted floors may not be capable of carrying vehicle loading. Deadstock can often be removed using an excavator with a relatively long boom (or stick), and reaching in from both sides. Be careful not to undermine remaining structural components.

Using very heavy equipment too close to an in-barn manure tank wall can result in structural damage or collapse.

NATURAL DISASTER

The Eastern Ontario ice storm of January 1998 is an example of a natural disaster with devastating effects on livestock agriculture.



The ice storm of 1998 is one example of the difficulties that can occur while caring for livestock when normal equipment and services are unavailable. Other disasters such as tornadoes or floods can also lead to deadstock – and the need for emergency disposal of large numbers of carcasses.

BORDER CLOSURE

Because of Ontario's dependence on export markets (particularly for swine and beef), a border closure would inevitably lead to a surplus of livestock in Ontario that our domestic market could not absorb. This could potentially create the need for welfare slaughter of healthy animals because they have no market and no housing.

IMMEDIATE STEPS

In the event of an emergency loss of a large number of livestock and poultry, several items will need immediate attention.

DEALING WITH TRAUMA

First and foremost is the need to recognize that livestock and poultry producers have a strong sense of responsibility for the welfare of the animals they care for. This means that the loss of animals under their care can be very traumatic.

Producers and family members need to be aware that this stress can lead to uncharacteristic behaviour. If an individual has trouble dealing with the situation at hand, support from close family, friends or even health professionals may be required.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Euthanizing Animals

In the event of an emergency loss situation, there may be animals who survive the initial event but have been debilitated to the extent that they will never recover. These animals may be better served by being euthanized.

For more detailed information on acceptable methods, consult with a veterinarian. The OMAFRA livestock web page also has information on euthanizing compromised animals: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/index.html>

Temporary Shelter

If the barn structure and systems have been compromised, then animals will need to be moved to temporary facilities. Since alternative facilities are often not readily available in the vicinity, producers should investigate possible options as part of their contingency planning.

REPORTING

KEY CONTACTS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY DEADSTOCK DISPOSAL

CONCERN	CONTACT	CONSIDERATIONS
REPORTABLE DISEASE	Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact if any reportable disease is suspected or confirmed
ENVIRONMENTAL RISK	Ministry of the Environment (MOE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact if emergency carries potential for environmental impacts to soil, water or air
COMPLIANCE WITH NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT ACT	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact if emergency conditions exist that make it impractical to comply with NMA regulations • apply to OMAFRA for approval to dispose of the deadstock in a manner that would otherwise not be permitted under NMA regulation • request information on the regulatory requirements and technical aspects of disposal
INSURANCE / ADJUSTMENT LOSS	Your insurance company / adjuster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult with an insurance adjuster to ensure that costs for the disposal option will be covered • be aware that the final option chosen may depend on the adjuster's assessment of liability risk

DEADSTOCK DISPOSAL

CHALLENGES

Emergency loss situations can pose unique disposal problems for a number of reasons:

- ▶ volumes may be large and exceed the capacity of available equipment, disposal facilities or disposal sites
- ▶ deadstock may be in an unsalvageable condition for rendering because of issues such as fire degradation or chemical residues
- ▶ it may be unsafe or difficult to remove deadstock from the barn
 - ▷ examples include the aftermath of a barn fire where the structural integrity of the building is in question, or a situation where dangerous gases are present.

OPTIONS

In determining the most appropriate disposal method for an emergency loss situation, consider seeking advice from agencies including MOE, OMAFRA, the local licensed deadstock collector (if service in that area is available), and your insurance company.

The following options are legal in Ontario.

Licensed Deadstock Collector/Rendering

This is the preferred option since it recycles the deadstock into useful by-products. However, please take into account the following factors:

- ▶ collection is often not a viable option due to the volume, condition and accessibility of deadstock
- ▶ renderers run their operations at or near capacity and therefore may not be able to manage a sudden influx of a large number of deadstock
- ▶ deadstock must be in good condition in order to meet the renderer's finished product standards
- ▶ pickup should be arranged with the renderer directly or through the deadstock collector.

If rendering is not an option, a deadstock collector may be able to transport deadstock to a landfill or other approved disposal site. However, this must be prearranged with the landfill or disposal site. Most landfills do not routinely accept deadstock and very few accept large numbers of deadstock.

Composting

This is an effective, viable option. Again, you should take into account a number of factors:

- ▶ composting requires good management and routine monitoring
 - ▷ depending on the cause of the emergency loss, a producer may not have the time to properly manage and monitor a compost pile – e.g., in the aftermath of a barn fire, other considerations such as cleanup and rebuilding of the barn, and caring for animals in off-site alternative facilities may leave little time for overseeing an effective compost pile
- ▶ quick access to a potentially large volume of high-carbon material such as wood shavings will be needed in order for proper composting to take place
 - ▷ it may be difficult to obtain the necessary quantity in a timely manner – investigate sources as part of a contingency planning process
- ▶ siting needs careful consideration to minimize potential environmental risks – see guidelines on page 32
 - ▷ make sure you'd be able to deliver water to the site if the pile needs additional moisture
 - ▷ also make sure you can turn the pile to ensure complete composting.

Burial

While burial is not the preferred option, it is legal and often becomes the only reasonable alternative after other options have been fully explored. Consider:

- ▶ it may be very difficult to meet some of the burial requirements when larger numbers of livestock and poultry are involved
- ▶ it's important to research the site fully to establish a safe burial site – regulatory requirements including soil type and setback distances must be followed
- ▶ if burial is the only realistic option and it is impractical to comply with regulatory burial requirements under the Nutrient Management Act, then OMAFRA must be informed and a director must give authorization before burial can proceed
- ▶ access to equipment needed to transport deadstock, dig hole and bury.

Other Options

The nature of the losses would overwhelm the capacity of disposal vessels and incinerators.

DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY LOSS PLAN

In the event of an emergency loss of livestock and poultry, many issues will require immediate decisions. Having an emergency loss plan in place will not only alleviate some of the stress of the situation, but will likely mean that the list of disposal options will be expanded.

PLAN ELEMENTS

Emergency Contact Numbers

- ▶ human support services
- ▶ animal welfare
- ▶ reporting
- ▶ contact numbers for sourcing equipment, materials and services

Develop Deadstock Disposal Contingency Plans

- ▶ choose preferred disposal method in consultation with appropriate agencies and businesses (MOE, OMAFRA, deadstock collector, renderer, insurance)
- ▶ identify site(s) – based on method chosen, use siting guidelines as described elsewhere in this publication
 - ▷ map the location of potential disposal sites for future reference
- ▶ work out details for accessing the use of necessary equipment, including location and contact numbers
- ▶ make a list of needed resources and details for sourcing – including names and contact information

EMERGENCY LOSS PLAN

In the event of a large loss of animals or birds, it is crucial to have a pre-established plan in place to deal quickly and effectively with the deadstock. Having the info you need at hand for each disposal option is key to dealing with the problem quickly, and in a secure manner.

If the suspected cause of mortality is disease, contact your veterinarian and/or the CFIA immediately.

Complete the contact information for all services applicable to your emergency loss plan(s). Keep this information readily available in case of large numbers of deadstock.

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

Service Name	Phone, day	Phone, evenings & weekends
Service Name	Phone, day	Phone, evenings & weekends
Service Name	Phone, day	Phone, evenings & weekends

DISEASE If a reportable disease is suspected, call your local CFIA office during normal business hours. Evenings and weekends, call 1-877-814-2342.

Veterinarian _____

CFIA _____

GENERAL

Alternative Livestock Facilities

OMAFRA	1-877-424-1300	email: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca website: www.omafra.gov.on.ca
MOE	1-800-565-4923	email: picemail@ene.gov.on.ca website: www.ene.gov.on.ca

Conservation Authority _____

Municipality _____

Mobile Wash Service _____

Disinfectant Supplier _____

Livestock or Poultry Board _____

Processor _____

Feed Supplier _____

Human Support Services _____

COLLECTION AND RENDERING

Licensed Deadstock Collector _____

Rendering Company _____

COMPOSTING

High-Carbon Material Supply

Equipment

Trucking

Water

Composting Service

BURIAL

Excavation Equipment

Trucking

Excavation Contractor

OTHER

Personnel

DISPOSAL PLANS

Disposal Method Chosen

On-Farm Disposal Site Chosen (if applicable) – based on siting regulations for preferred method

Estimate Volume if All Animals Lost (use to determine amount of carbon material – 3:1 by volume if composting, or size of hole if burying)

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Equipment (type, source, location)

Materials (type, source, location)

Personnel (skills required, names and contact information)
