



CLIPPINGS a weekly column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Getting Through a Bad Situation in the Swine Industry

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Because of packing plant shutdowns and slowdowns, a lot of heavy hogs have been left without a place to harvest them. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach is working with producers to dispose of these hogs working closely with Iowa Pork Producers and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to make wise decisions. Here is a short list for producers to check out what you can do.

1. **Make sure it is legal.** Farmers can dispose of normal mortalities without permits for onsite composting and rendering and with IDNR approved incinerators. Burying dead butcher hogs is limited to 44 pigs per acre on sites that are well drained and have separation distances from wells and water. Call the DNR to make sure the site is suitable and emergency variables have been given to exceed the 44 pigs per acre.

If the hogs are going to be moved down the road after they are dead, you will also need a variance from the IDNR. Offsite composting during this pandemic can also be obtained from the IDNR. The Northwest DNR office in Spencer's phone number is 712-262-4177. They have been very understanding during this difficult time.

2. **Make a plan that optimizes your options.** Think of all the issues of land, labor and financial costs that may last for several years. If you plan to compost onsite, add 20 to 40 pigs to a pile every 5 days. This will keep the footprint small and the active composting process continuing. Large single time piles can get too wet and tend to use a lot more cornstalks or woodchips than a continuous small pile.

Choose a good location away from water with good access to use the loader from all directions on an all-weather surface. The pile will tend to collapse as the mortalities decompose, so frequent addition of cover is required to prevent scavengers from finding the pile. Many publications on mortality composting have been written, but experiment with a few mortalities before you try for a large number.

Burning in conventional incinerators is a one hog at a time all day long process. An air curtain system will allow 200 to 300 pigs per day using waste logs as a fuel source. When the day is

over, ash is all that is left. There are few permits for these machines, but a recent demonstration showed how well it can work.

Burning in a mass grave will be fast, but the land will not be farmable for several years because of the slow decomposition of mortalities. Therefore, choose a location on the edge of a field or farmstead that will receive no traffic for several years. A DNR variance will also be needed.

3. **Check out current resources to offset the cost.** The NRCS and State of Iowa are currently helping with some of the cost associated with swine disposal. Contact the Iowa Pork Producers to see what is available at the current moment when the final decision is made.
4. **Keep records.** This is a time when keeping accurate records of what you had is important. Make sure that you date and sign each record.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach is working and researching better disposal methods, so we will be prepared if this ever happens again.

Please remember, this is a very trying time for all livestock producers and understanding is really needed.

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