

## **Composting as a Large Animal Mortality Disposal Option In Shenandoah County Virginia**

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### **Abstract**

Livestock producers in Shenandoah County, Virginia expressed concern regarding the disposing of livestock mortality. Over the past three to five years local renderers shifted from paying farmers a small amount of money for picking up mortality to charging farmers to pick up their mortality. Also farmers were becoming fearful that renderers might soon quit accepting large animal mortality. Several meetings were held to discuss options. Two decisions were made. First, the county would begin accepting large animal mortality at the county landfill. Policies and procedures by which the county would accept mortality were developed. From July 2004 through December 2005 the county landfill accepted 221 head of mortality. The county continues to accept mortality at the landfill. The second decision was that three demonstrations would be established to learn about composting large animal mortality. The composting demonstrations were conducted on three farms during the winter of 2005. Seven head of cattle were successfully composted and two head of cattle did not successfully compost. The conclusions of the composting demonstrations were that; (1) composting large animal mortality can be done successfully on farms; (2) composting will likely cost more than rendering or burial at the landfill for most Shenandoah County farmers and; (3) the large bones still remain at the end of the composting process which will likely be a disposal problem.

This presentation will provide insight into disposing of large animal mortality in the county landfill over the last 2 years and will provide information about the three on-farm composting demonstrations. A complete report on this project is available at the following web site:

[http://offices.ext.vt.edu/view.cfm?webname=shenandoah&section=newsletters\\_a&idn=9935](http://offices.ext.vt.edu/view.cfm?webname=shenandoah&section=newsletters_a&idn=9935)