



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

[Composting Large Animal Carcasses - NIWQP Project Wrap-Up](#)

This result-demonstration and education project was funded in early 2003 to promote the adoption of sound composting techniques as a meta-disposal method for large livestock carcasses, including beef and dairy cattle, horses and wild game. The total project duration was 42 months, including a 6-month, no-cost extension granted in 2006 to accommodate rapid changes in the carcass-disposal landscape brought on by three events of regional or national scope: 1) In fall 2005, hurricane Rita struck the Gulf Coast, causing widespread loss of beef and dairy cattle on pasture and rangeland in east Texas and Louisiana. 2) A drier-than-normal winter of 2005-06 in the southern High Plains created favorable conditions for extreme wildfires in the Texas Panhandle, consuming 725,000 acres of rangeland and killing nearly 2,000 cattle by the end of March 2006 (USDA-NRCS, 2006). 3) In 2006, the U. S. Congress began considering a bill to outlaw the slaughter of horses for human consumption. Those three events brought short-term pressure to bear on Texas Cooperative Extension (TCE) to propose disposal and meta-disposal options for premature mortalities of large livestock. That pressure was superimposed on the original motivation for this project, which was the steady decrease in rendering companies' pick-up services with the contraction in the market for rendering products. In retrospect, this project was well timed by CSREES to allow us to respond quickly and substantively to both the long-term trends and the short-term demand for carcass-disposal and meta-disposal alternatives.

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