

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
SOUTH CAROLINA
OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS
ANIMAL MORTALITY FACILITY

Composting – Poultry

CODE 316

Land Owner/Operator _____

County _____ SWCD _____ Farm/Tract No. _____

Prepared By _____ Date _____

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE ITEMS

A properly operated and maintained animal mortality facility is an asset to your farm. This composting facility was designed and installed for temporary storage, composting, and treatment of animal mortality. The estimated life span of this installation is at least 10 years. The life of this installation can be assured and usually increased by developing and carrying out a systematic operation and maintenance program.

This practice will require you to perform periodic operation and maintenance to maintain satisfactory performance. Your operation and maintenance program requirements include:

COMPOSTER OPERATION

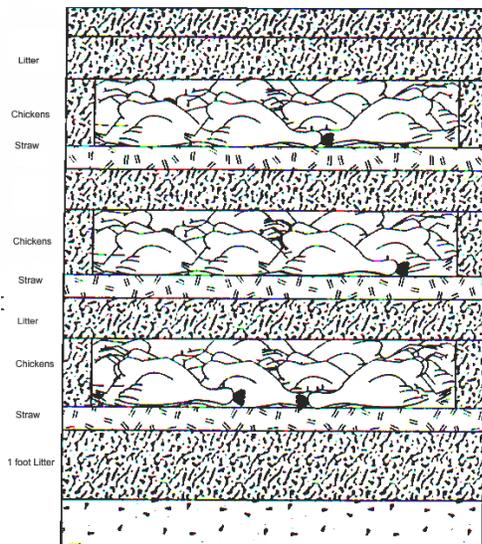
For proper composting, correct proportions of carbon, nitrogen, moisture, and oxygen need to be present in the mix. Common carbon sources are sawdust or wheat straw. It is desirable because of its bulking ability, which allows entry of oxygen. Other carbon sources that could be used are peanut hulls, cottonseed hulls, sawdust, leaves, etc. If lab testing of the litter or experience indicates that the carbon/nitrogen ratio is adequate (20 - 35:1 ratio), then litter alone should be sufficient for composting mortality as long as desirable bulking ability is achieved and moisture is properly managed. Moisture management is critical and must be maintained between 40 and 55 percent (40% -does not leave your hand moist when squeezed, 55% - if more than two drops drip from your hand the material is too moist).

Recipe for composting broiler mortality

INGREDIENT	VOLUME	WEIGHTS
Straw	1.0	0.10
Carcasses	1.0	1.0
Litter	1.5	1.2
Water	0.5	0.75

Compost layering procedure

- a. The first layer is one foot of litter.
- b. A 4-6 inch layer of carbon amendment (sawdust is preferred) is added according to the recipe
- c. A layer of carcasses is added. Carcasses shall be laid side-by-side and shall not be stacked on top of one another. Carcasses placed directly on dirt or concrete floors, or against bin walls will not compost properly.
- d. Water is added (uniform spray).
- e. Carcasses are covered with a 6-inch layer of litter.
- f. Next layer of carcasses begun with carbon amendment and above steps repeated.
- g. When composter is full, cap the 6-inch layer with four additional inches.



Maintain the moisture content at 40 to 55 percent during the composting process (40% - does not leave your hand moist when squeezed, 55% will allow about one drop of water to be released when squeezed, > 55% - if more than two drops drip from your hand the material is too moist, therefore add sawdust or dry carbon source).

Temperature is the primary indicator to determine if the composting process is working properly. A minimum temperature of 130° F shall be reached during the composting process. A temperature of 140° F is optimum; however, temperatures may range up to 160° F. If the minimum temperature is not reached, the resulting compost shall be incorporated immediately after land application or recomposted by turning and adding moisture as needed. Compost managed at the required temperatures will favor destruction of any pathogens and weed seeds.

Good carcass compost should heat up to the 140° range within a few days. Failure of the compost material to heat up properly normally results from two causes. First, the nitrogen source is inadequate (example wet or leached litter). A pound of commercial fertilizer spread over a carcass layer will usually solve this problem. Secondly, the compost fails when too much water has been added and the compost pile becomes anaerobic. An anaerobic compost bin is characterized by temperatures less than 120°, offensive odors, and black oozing compound flowing from the bottom of the compost bin. In this case a drier bulking / carbon amendment should be added to dry the mix. Then, the material should be remixed and composted.

