

## **OFA Commentary 6009**

### **Safe disposal of dead stock essential**

**By Keith Currie, Executive Member, Ontario Federation of Agriculture**

It's something every livestock producer knows – if you have live stock on your farm, you are also going to have dead stock.

Safe disposal of that dead stock is increasingly a problem in Ontario for farmers and society.

For many years, farmers with dead animals to be disposed of had a responsive and dedicated industry that a telephone call would summon – problem solved.

That all came to a crashing halt when BSE was identified and new regulations for handling Specified Risk Material were imposed by CFIA. The responsive and dedicated service had to face higher handling costs and a severe restriction in markets available for the products they produced. More recently the market for hides has collapsed, taking away another source of revenue for dead stock service operators.

As a result farmers are faced with paying a fee for the pick-up and disposal service. Coupled with losing a valuable animal this presents a double-sided hit to the balance sheet.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been working with the industry to find an acceptable solution that will keep our valuable disposal services in operation, providing farmers with an affordable alternative to on-farm disposal of deadstock.

A task team was set up by OFA to address the problems facing the farming and dead stock industries. The operators have reported on their efforts to change business plans and handling methods to reduce costs and improve revenues. This will, in turn, allow for a lower cost to farmers for their services.

The Task Team also looked at the issue of Specified Risk Materials (SRM) and the ramifications for on-farm disposal. In Ontario, any compost containing SRM cannot be moved from the composting farm location. Further if it is spread on land, grazing on that land should be avoided for a five year period according to CFIA.

On-farm disposal also restricts proximity of burial to tile drains and water sources to ensure our water supplies remain unaffected. This makes sense. Farmers always strive to guard against any risk of water contamination through their farm practices.

But how much land do these restrictions leave for on-farm disposal? How much land has sufficient soil depth to enable burial? How much of that land is not tile drained? How much pasture will be off-limits according to CFIA recommendations once spread with

dead stock compost? And how long before all that available land is used up? These are questions we are trying to answer.

These issues clearly underscore the need to maintain a viable deadstock collection and disposal business in Ontario. However, the reduced volumes of dead stock being offered to disposal services by farmers continues to negatively impact the financial viability of service operators.

It is a catch 22 situation. Higher pick-up costs have reduced volumes, further eroding the financial strength of the companies.

There is no doubt the additional costs of pick-up hurt, particularly at a time when the industry is facing its own low prices for cattle. However, deadstock must be disposed of in some fashion.

A telephone call to a licensed disposal service remains the simplest way to comply with all government regulations and avoid any potential liability down the road.

OFA continues to work with the industry to determine any measures that can be taken by government, the farming sector, and the disposal industry to ensure the viable and affordable disposal of farm animal carcasses. The industry performs a vital service for Ontario and needs to remain sound.