

Dec 3, 2021

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Flood-Spoiled Feed Management

During the recent flooding events in Southwestern BC in late 2021, many livestock producers have had a variety of impacts. One of these challenges is contamination and spoilage of feed (e.g., grain, total mixed ration, hay, silage, etc.). For producers looking to dispose of spoiled feed, composting on farm or storage for future land application is likely the best option. Some recommendations from a few resources on the topic include:

- Carefully inspect the outside of bales, ag bags, etc. for the presence of increased moisture and water infiltration.
- As a general guideline, bales that have been wet should have at least the outer 20% discarded, though this will vary by how much flood water was on the property and how long it was there. Any identified wet hay should be discarded, and the adjacent layer of hay should also be discarded as a precaution.
- Flooded Ag Bags may only be wet on one side. However, water will often move along the bottom of the bag/feed, so inspection of the bottom portion of feed is necessary.
- The outer perimeter of silage piles should also be inspected for contamination. In general, any flood-contaminated silage and the adjacent two feet of a silage should be discarded.
- As with other feed, grain in bins should be inspected. Wet grain can be mixed in compost piles with other feed.
- Feed that will be composted should be moved to a dry (or driest part if flooding still partially present) of the pasture/property.
- The compost piles should be well away from buildings, as composting feed can reach temperatures high enough to combust and fires can spread quickly.
- Compost/feed piles should be kept low (4 to 6 feet maximum) to keep internal compost temperatures from elevating too high.
- It is ideal to have multiple smaller piles rather than one bigger compost pile, as this will also keep temperatures down, and there is a smaller amount of fuel if a fire starts in one pile.
- If there is a concern for local wildlife scavengers, any grain should be mixed with or placed under cover of hay/silage.

AEMCode Guidance for composting or spreading of agricultural by-products.

The event will have generated a significant amount of agricultural by-products including:

- Solid manure - wet
- Soiled animal bedding and feed
- Agricultural, vegetative material - spoiled crops (on land and in storage)

AEMCode provides for

1. The land application of these as nutrient sources (Note restrictions such as setbacks, soil/weather/topographic conditions)
2. The composting as agricultural compost of these materials in outdoor composting facilities

General rules for composting

- Collect and contain any leachate generated and do not discharge directly into a watercourse or onto the land
- Divert rain or stormwater runoff from entering piles
- Prevent contaminated runoff, air contaminants and leachate from entering watercourses, crossing your property boundary, or going below the water table
- Prevent wildlife, pests, and domestic pets from accessing composting structures or outdoor piles

Outdoor agricultural composting piles

- Locate the pile in a high, dry area (i.e., not in standing water, water-saturated soils or seasonally flooded areas) and set back at least:
 - 30 metres (100 feet) from drinking water sources and watercourses
 - 4.5 metres (9 feet) from your property boundary
 - Piles may stay in one location for up to 12 months for agricultural by-products
 - Check the pile weekly, keep records of the date that composting began, type and source of materials, the location, and what you found

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/industrial-waste/agriculture/regulation-requirements>