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Disposal Pits

Of the methods discussed, disposal pits are the least desirable method for managing mortality from an environmental protection perspective. This method differs from burial because the dead animals are placed in a lined pit (Figure 51-13) rather than an unlined grave. Dead animals may take a long time to decompose in a disposal pit because of limited aeration. For this reason, there may be a high potential for groundwater contamination. Where permitted by regulations, disposal pits should be considered only if soil conditions will protect the groundwater and there is adequate separation distance from drinking water supplies. The requirements for siting disposal pits are very similar to burial. In addition, disposal pit sites should be located on sites with 5% or greater slopes to ensure good surface drainage, minimizing infiltration.

Disposal pits are constructed of concrete blocks, treated lumber, or poured-in-place concrete. The bottom of the pit should be soil covered with several inches of crushed-rock gravel. The pit requires a cover made of reinforced concrete with an opening (filling port) large enough for the mortality. This opening must have a lid that can be secured to seal the pit when it is not in use.

In summary, the disposal pit method of managing mortality has the following advantages and disadvantages (Table 51-10).

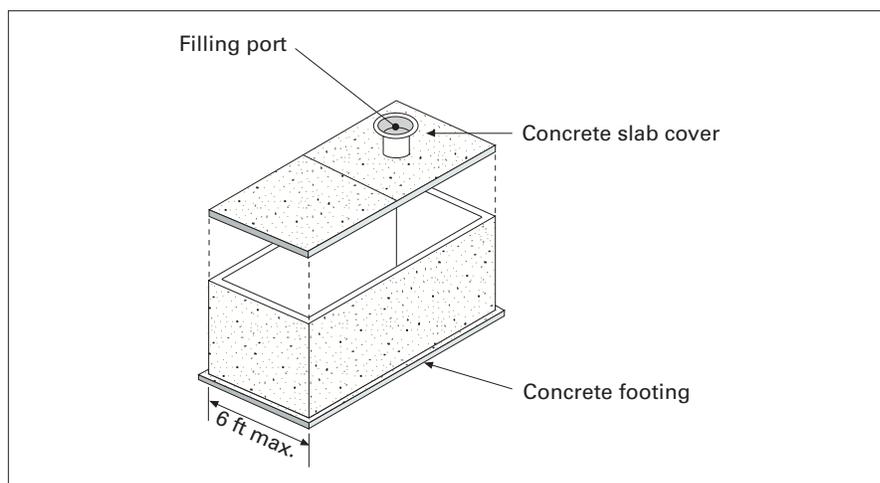


Figure 51-13. Disposal pit.

Source: NRCS Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook 1996, p. 10-78.

Table 51-10. Mortality management using disposal pits.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Simplicity	1. Nutrients contained in the dead animals are wasted.
	2. Exacting soil and drainage conditions are required.
	3. Satisfactory location may not be convenient to facilities.
	4. Possibility of environmental hazards
	5. Not permitted in many areas