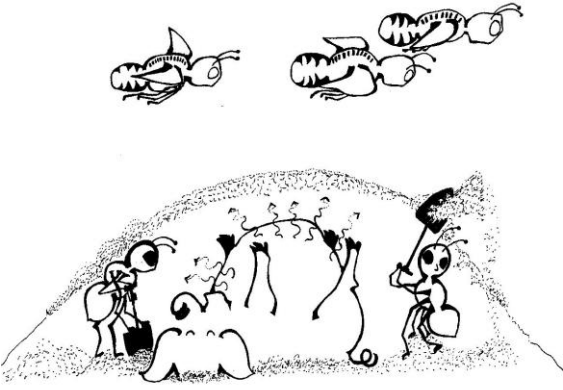

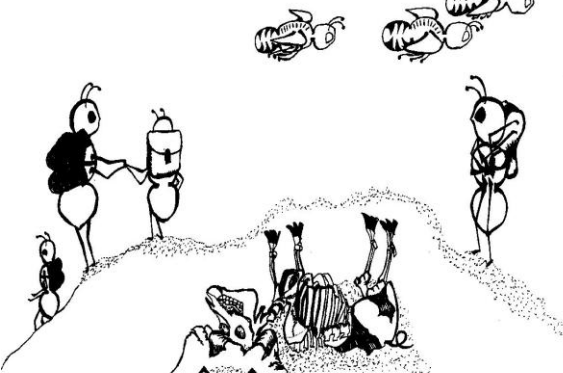



SEPARATE THE DRY FROM THE WET STAGES OF COMPOSTING TO CONSERVE SAWDUST

	<p>Stage 1: BLOAT (dry)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sawdust filters out odour and nuisance flies • Bloating ruptures the hide • Pig tissue is > 70% water <p>Protect your heap from rain with a tarp, and do not add water.</p>
	<p>Stage 2: ACTIVE DECAY (dry)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insects are the prime movers • Insect tunnelling promotes microbial growth <p>Sawdust absorbs the excess fluids, keeping the carcass aerobic.</p>
	<p>Stage 3: DRY DECAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body fluids are exhausted • Insects decamp • Microbial growth slows <p>Water is needed now, to stimulate the microbes to finish the job</p>
	<p>Stage 4: WET COMPLETION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insect activity is less • Blackened sawdust coats the hide and bones <p>Use conventional wet composting to speed up the microbial breakdown of hide and bones.</p>

How to Dry-Compost Animal Carcasses



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The aim of **dry composting** is to reduce the volume and mass of dead animals or abattoir waste as quickly as possible, without causing odour or leachate. The dry stage effectively reduces the volume of the waste by 70%, minimising the area of windrow required for wet composting.

What do I need to compost carcasses?

A compacted earthen pad is necessary, to allow all-weather access and to minimise the potential for any leaching into the ground. Roofed structures with concrete or compacted earthen floors are more practical, as all-weather access is guaranteed and the pile is covered at all times. Alternatively hay bales can be used to construct a rectangle to retain the carcasses and the odour-blanket material. Placing a tarpaulin over the top will rain-proof the retainer, using tyres to anchor it in place. A bund or spoon drain may be needed, to avoid overland flow running through the compost pile. Sawdust, grain dust or chaff are very suitable as odour blanket material.

How do I prepare the carcasses and manage the dry pile?

Place the carcass or abattoir waste on a raised bed of sawdust or bark chip (30cm depth), within the straw bale retainer. Cover the carcass with a 30cm blanket of sawdust, to minimise odour and the activity of nuisance flies. The normal gut microbes produce gases after death inflating the body and rupturing the hide, providing the attraction and points of entry for composting insects. **Keep the sawdust dry.** Adding water at this stage could exclude air causing body fats to seal (adipocere), stopping the decomposition process.

For large carcasses, you may wish to slit the gut first to minimise the expansion and contraction of the pile- which may cause the odour blanket to separate. Otherwise, check the pile on a daily basis during the bloat stage for the presence of nuisance flies. If present, add more sawdust! Continue to add carcasses and sawdust as necessary, but **be sure to record the date of entry of the last carcass to the finished pile.**

How long will the dry composting process take?

The bloat and active decay stages occur very rapidly in summer, taking as little as 2 months (after the last carcass was added). At this stage any seepage from the gut or flesh will have been converted into dehydrated, blackened lumps of composted sawdust, encasing the bones and skin. Remove these blackened lumps with a front-end loader or equivalent, and use them as bulking material for **co-composting** (refer to 'can do' sheet 5). Alternatively, the remains can be pulverised in a mulcher or hammer mill, and spread on land as a mulch. Any uncomposted sawdust can be left at the dry retainer site, for the next batch of carcasses.