
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 411
Author: Papan (D), et al.
Amended: 7/17/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE: 5-0, 7/1/25
AYES: Hurtado, Alvarado-Gil, Cortese, McNerney, Padilla

SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE: 8-0, 7/16/25
AYES: Blakespear, Valladares, Dahle, Gonzalez, Hurtado, Menjivar, Padilla,
Pérez

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/29/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/2/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Livestock carcasses: disposal: composting

SOURCE: California Cattlemen's Association
Roots of Change

DIGEST: This bill authorizes, notwithstanding existing prohibitions, a livestock carcass resulting from a routine livestock mortality event or on-farm processing to be composted if certain conditions are met. This bill outlines best management practices for livestock composting, developed by the secretary with Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) and the State Water Resources Control Board. These practices shall include, but not be limited to, protecting groundwater, public health, and the food supply; properly managing compost piles; collaborating with local enforcement agencies; and enforcing penalties for failing to follow the best management practices. This bill also requires operators to notify the local enforcement agency and regional water board within 30 days of starting operations, providing location and contact information.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Meat, Poultry & Egg Safety Branch (MPES) under the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA): Licenses and inspects renderers who recycle animal carcasses, packing house waste and inedible kitchen grease.
- 2) Establishes the Rendering Advisory Board: The Board is responsible for advising the secretary of CDFA on matters related to the rendering industry.
- 3) Establishes the CalRecycle: Responsible for establishing minimum standards for solid waste handling, transfer, composting, transformation, and disposal, as specified, including livestock carcasses.
- 4) Establishes the composting of unprocessed mammalian tissue (e.g. cattle, goats, sheep), including but not limited to, flesh, organs, hide, blood, bone and marrow is prohibited.
- 5) States animal carcasses from animals on pasture or rangeland shall be managed so as to prevent the creation of excessive vectors or other adverse public health/well-being conditions. This language aligns with many local county ordinances.
- 6) Establishes that the state veterinarian shall impose a quarantine if he or she believes, upon any basis reasonably supportable by standard epidemiological practice or credible scientific research, that a population of domestic animals or food product from animals has contracted, or may carry, an illness, infection, pathogen, contagion, toxin, or condition that, without intervention, could transmit illness that could kill or seriously damage other animals or humans, including, in addition to the original condition, those clinically plausible secondary illnesses, infections, pathogens, contagions, toxins, or conditions arising from effects of the original.
- 7) Allows animal owners to bury an animal that has passed from a routine mortality on the owner's property after the animal dies if the burial is within three miles of where the animal died.

- 8) States if an animal dies from a contagious disease, the animal shall not be used for the food of any human being, domestic animal, or fowl.
- 9) States the carcasses of animals with any contagious disease shall be disposed of by means prescribed by CDFA, Division of Animal Industry.
- 10) States during an emergency, CDFA may work with California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA), including CalRecycle and the water boards, and local jurisdictions to allow temporary disposal at permitted landfills.
- 11) Defines "Animals" to mean burros, cattle, goats, horses, mules, sheep, swine and other large domesticated animals and poultry.
- 12) Defines "Rendering" to mean all recycling, processing, and conversion of animal and fish materials and carcasses and inedible kitchen grease into fats, oils, proteins, and other products that are used in the animal, poultry, and pet food industries and other industries.

This bill:

- 1) Allows any part of a livestock carcass resulting from a routine livestock mortality event or on-farm processing may be composted on-farm if all of the following requirements are met:
 - a) The composting of the carcass is conducted in accordance with best management practices for livestock composting adopted by the secretary in collaboration with the CalRecycle and the State Water Resources Control Board.
 - i) The best management practices shall include specifications on protection protocol for groundwater, proper management of compost piles, enforcement, and penalties for failing to follow best practices.
 - ii) The best management practices shall be established in collaboration with local enforcement agencies, and protection of public health and food supply practices.
 - b) The total amount of composting material onsite at any one time does not exceed 100 cubic yards, inclusive of livestock carcasses.

- c) All composting material, including livestock carcasses, comes from an agricultural site or sites owned or leased by the owner of the livestock carcasses.
- d) The composting activity occurs on an agricultural site owned or leased by the owner of the livestock carcasses.
 - i) If the activity occurs on an agricultural site owned or leased by the owner that is not the site where the carcasses were generated:
 - (1) The activity shall occur in the county in which the carcass was generated or within an adjacent county;
 - (2) The transport of the carcasses shall comply with all applicable state and local laws and regulations.
- e) After the composting material is converted into cured compost, the cured compost is applied to an agricultural site owned or leased by the owner of the livestock carcasses that produced the cured compost and is in compliance with the best management practices adopted pursuant to paragraph (1).
- f) The operator of the composting operation notifies the applicable local enforcement agencies, including the regional and water control board of any on-farm composting operations of the facility within 30 days of commencing operation, including the location and operator contact information.

2) Defines the following:

- a) “Livestock” to mean any mammalian animal described in Section 19201.
- b) “On-farm processing” means the slaughter of the livestock under circumstances authorized by subdivision (c) of Section 19020.
- c) “Routine livestock mortality event” means the death of the livestock from a natural cause. It does not include any of the following:
 - i) The death of the livestock due to being euthanized using barbiturates.
 - ii) The death of the livestock from a disease listed on the department’s List of Reportable Conditions for Animals and Animal Products published pursuant to Section 9101.
 - iii) The death of the livestock in a location that is under a quarantine imposed pursuant to Section 9562.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/29/25)

California Cattlemen's Association (co-source)
Roots of Change (co-source)
Agricultural Council of California
Butte County Local Food Network
California Association of Environmental Health Administrators
California Certified Organic Farmers
California Climate & Agriculture Network
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Wool Growers Association
Californians Against Waste
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Defenders of Wildlife
Modoc County Board of Supervisors
People Food and Land Foundation
Slow Food Sonoma County North
Tomkat Ranch
Western United Dairies

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/29/25)

California Grain & Feed Association
Pacific Coast Renderers Association

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author:

“Assembly Bill (AB) 411 offers ranchers a practical and environmentally friendly method of handling livestock carcasses by allowing them to compost the remains on-site.

“Currently, composting is not allowed. As such, many ranchers face significant challenges disposing of livestock remains. While they can transmit the remains to a rendering facility, often such facilities are out of reach, leaving ranchers with limited and less-than-ideal options. They can let carcasses decompose naturally, move them to disposal pits or bone piles, or bury them. Unfortunately, decomposition and bone piles attract predators, leading to dangerous interactions with live animals. Decomposition can also lead to serious health and environmental concerns. Bone burial is subject to complex regional regulations that make the method costly.

“On-site composting is a sustainable, cost-effective option that allows ranchers to manage their operations efficiently, safely, and responsibly. AB 411 offers a proactive approach to protecting both livestock and the environment.”

The California Cattlemen's Association and Roots of Change, co-sponsors of the bill, and others write in support of the bill stating:

“Many ranchers without adequate access to rendering facilities, landfills, or burial elect to allow carcasses to decompose in large “bone piles,” which are attractants for predators such as gray wolves, bears, mountain lions, and coyotes, and can result in increased livestock-predator interactions that risk the loss of additional livestock or the take of depredating predators.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: In an “Oppose Unless Amended” letter from the Pacific Coast Renderers Association and the California Grain and Feed Association states:

“While we empathize with farmers and ranchers who face challenges in managing livestock mortalities where rendering services are unavailable, we are concerned that AB 411 is overly broad in its application, bypassing existing law and creating the potential for unregulated composting operations statewide, even where they could harm public health and safety or where rendering services are available. As such, we suggest the bill should be narrowed to address legitimate concerns in rural Northern California counties or areas with limited access to rendering facilities. We look forward to working with you and the sponsors to responsibly address these concerns.”

The letter requests several amendments that would limit the scope to only farmers and ranchers, reduce the allowable amount of mammalian tissue, mandate composting facility requirements and best management practices, and limit applicability to mortalities occurring outside of existing rendering facility service areas.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/2/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra,

Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

Prepared by: Reichel Everhart / AGRI. / (916) 651-1508
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