

requirements. Our inspectors cannot directly observe, or even be aware of, all the thousands of animal disposal incidents that occur each day. In addition to enforcement and penalties, there may be a role for incentives to help achieve compliance in dead stock disposal practices.

One possible incentive may be a program to help owners pay for the cost of dead stock disposal under certain circumstances. In a January 2002 report<sup>11</sup> about strengthening regulatory efforts to prevent BSE in the United States, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) noted that USDA sometimes subsidizes animal disposal costs in order to obtain sufficient tissue samples for its BSE surveillance program. The report notes that "In 1998 USDA implemented a cooperative program with the rendering industry to ensure that carcasses of animals condemned at slaughter for signs of neurological disease are held until test results are completed. Under this program, USDA may share the expenses to store or dispose of carcasses during the testing period."

Similar programs have used State, Federal, and industry subsidies to obtain surveillance samples and to encourage responsible dead stock disposal. For example, when cattle with neurological signs of illness are identified at ante mortem inspection in several States, the costs of sample collection and carcass disposal are shared between State government, Federal agencies, and renderers. We are seeking more data on the rationale and operations of these and similar programs, especially including any studies of their overall costs and benefits. We hope to assemble enough data to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with possible dead stock disposal programs that could be designed to maximize benefits to the general public, cattle producers, disposal industries, and others. One possible design for a voucher-subsidized "multi-benefit" dead stock disposal program is discussed below.

Consider a program where the Federal or State Government issues qualifying producers a certain number of "stock disposal vouchers" each year. If one of the producer's animals dies on-farm, or becomes so ill or injured the producer decides to euthanize it, the producer could use a voucher to cover some or all of the costs of disposing of the animal. The government that issued the

vouchers may make arrangements with incinerator operators or other disposal businesses that will honor the vouchers. Dead stock transporters may also be involved in the voucher system. In all cases, businesses may benefit from increased formal disposal of dead stock that, without the voucher system, might be buried on-farm. Solid waste disposal systems may benefit as fewer animals are taken to limited landfill spaces and more animals are incinerated. Public health and environmental values may benefit from fewer casual or illegal animal disposals that pollute groundwater and spread disease.

Such a voucher system could also benefit USDA disease surveillance programs if it includes a requirement to allow USDA to examine and collect samples from the animals for which vouchers are used. USDA staff or accredited veterinarians could be used to examine animals prior to euthanasia and to collect samples from dead animals prior to their disposal.

As an alternative to a predefined voucher system for dead stock disposal, Federal or State agencies could concentrate on identifying, and paying disposal costs for, downer animals that would be euthanized on the farm. This approach might offer a bounty or reward payment for owners who report certain types of animals in their herds—e.g., adult cattle showing certain signs indicative of CNS conditions. The Federal or State agency could then examine the animal, euthanize it, take samples if the examination showed a reason to do so, and arrange to dispose of the cadaver. The owner would receive a small bounty payment and would avoid any disposal costs he might otherwise have faced if he euthanized the animal without government assistance.

The above are just two examples of a design for a "multi-benefit" dead stock disposal program; we encourage commenters to suggest others. If your comment suggests a system for dead stock disposal, please include your thoughts on what businesses, levels of government, or other parties should be involved. We are particularly interested in hearing comments on whether such programs should be organized on the county or State level, a regional level, or a national level, and what role the Federal Government should play.

#### *Dead Stock Disposal for Species Other Than Cattle*

While this notice primarily addresses disposal of cattle, there are obviously related issues for other species. In particular, commenters may wish to address disposal of sheep and goats

with regard to scrapie, disposal of captive elk and deer with regard to CWD, and disposal of all types of livestock with regard to communicable non-TSE diseases. We hope commenters will help us to understand what dead stock disposal issues are common to all of these species, what issues are of particular importance to different types of producers, and the possible costs to involved parties (including producers and taxpayers) of addressing these issues.

#### *Summary of Issues Open for Comment*

- What is the preferred approach and associated costs to affected parties for controlling risks associated with disposal of nonambulatory and dead livestock?

- Are there any cross-cutting issues between safe disposal of specified risk materials such as brain and spinal cord and safe disposal options for downer and on-farm dead animals?

- Are there practical ways to cull higher-risk downer cattle, e.g. cattle that may have a non-obvious CNS condition, before they are sent to slaughter? How should risk factors such as age, physical condition, and the source and type of cattle be considered when sending downer cattle to slaughter? What would such culling cost affected parties?

- Since APHIS currently relies on collecting samples from downer animals, at slaughter and other locations, as a key part of BSE surveillance, how could we continue to obtain samples for testing from downer cattle if they are not sent to slaughter?

- What carcass disposal methods are safe, fast, complete, and environmentally acceptable? What combination of regulatory requirements, incentives, and cooperative relationships with production and disposal industries would result in sustainable procedures for the safe disposal of dead stock, and what are the costs associated with such solutions?

- Can rendering be an effective means for safely disposing of dead stock in a manner that minimizes risks of spreading BSE and other animal diseases? Under what conditions? What are the associated technical, economic, regional, environmental, and practical business issues?

- What are equitable ways to share the costs of dead stock disposal, to concentrate and increase economic opportunities and social benefits that can be associated with responsible dead stock disposal?

- What businesses, levels of government, or other parties should be involved in dead stock disposal? Should such programs be organized on the

<sup>11</sup> "MAD COW DISEASE: Improvements in the Animal Feed Ban and Other Regulatory Areas Would Strengthen U.S. Prevention Efforts," GAO-02-183, Government Accounting Office, January 2002.