

Feeding Food Wastes to Livestock¹

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Many food wastes have a high nutritional value, and recycling them for animal feed can be a viable waste disposal option.

What are Food Wastes?

The term "food waste" used in this fact sheet is applied to wasted food from the food service industry (i.e. restaurants) and grocery stores. These wastes include plate waste (scrapings), food leftovers, kitchen wastes, spoiled food, expired food, mislabeled food, etc. Other terms to describe these wastes include food residuals, plate waste and kitchen scraps. Two older terms, "garbage" and "swill," are still used, but the livestock and waste management industries prefer not to use these older terms.

Feeding Food Wastes to Livestock

Many kinds of food waste can be fed directly to livestock with minimal processing. Food waste that does not contain meat or meat by-products and has not been in contact with meat or meat by-products is exempt from federal and Florida regulations and can be fed to cattle and swine with no processing.

Food wastes that include meat or meat by-products or that have been in contact with meat or meat by-products can be fed to swine. Individuals who plan to feed swine this type of food waste must be licensed as food waste feeders (garbage feeders) by the state of Florida³. The state has adopted regulations set forth in the Federal 1980 Swine Health Protection Act.⁴ Under these regulations, food wastes with meat or meat by-products or that have been in contact with meat or meat by-products must be cooked at 212°F (100°C) (boiled) for at least 30 minutes before being used as swine feed. There over 100 licensed swine food waste feeders in Florida. Licenses must be renewed annually. The state of Florida has inspectors who will periodically visit swine food waste feeders to ensure that cooking regulations are being followed.

Cattle can be fed food wastes containing meat or meat by-products or that have been in contact with meat or meat by-products as long as these wastes were from food intended for human consumption. In January of 2004, however, the Federal government proposed four rule changes to restrict feeding of food

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 3. Florida Division of Animal Industry Rules, Chapter 5C-11 (5C-11.015; Feeding Garbage; Application for Permit Fees; form DACS-09015).
 4. Florida Division of animal Industry Rules, Chapter 5C-11 (5C-11.017, Feeding Garbage; Procedures, Equipment, Records, Quarantine, and Pre-treating Requirements).

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waste containing meat to cattle. This proposal was the result of the first confirmed case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE; "mad cow disease") in cattle in the United States. One of these rules states that plate waste cannot be fed to ruminant animals. The reason for this proposed ban is that it is hard to distinguish protein of ruminant origin that may be in plate waste/food waste from protein of ruminant origin in banned rendered products. (Since 1997 it has been illegal in the USA to feed various rendered feed products such as meat and bone meal of ruminant origin to cattle and sheep and other ruminant animals. This ban was put in place in response to the BSE outbreak in Europe). As of 2007, however, the proposed rule changes have not been implemented. Therefore, it is still legal to feed food wastes that contain meat or that have been in contact with meat to cattle. Be aware that this can change in the future.

Further Information

For additional information, and to obtain a license (Form DACS-09015 - Inspection/Application for Permit to Feed Garbage to Swine), contact the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Div. of Animal Industry, The Mayo Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800 (<http://doacs.state.fl.us/ai>). Information about food waste feeding can also be obtained from your County Cooperative Extension Service.

Additional information about feeding food waste to swine can be found in the animal science extension fact sheet AS143 (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AN143>).