

Waste & Recycling

Part 3h – Material Fact Sheets

Farm Waste

What is Farm Waste?

This includes both household items (glass, paper, metals, cardboard, white-ware, furniture) and farm business related materials such as silage wrap, chemicals, containers, drums, scrap metal, fence wire, pallets, timber posts, engine oil and vineyard/orchard nets.

Some of these farm wastes had been burned or buried on farm, or stored in bulk, but there are much more environmentally responsible options available for recycling or safer disposal of waste materials.

What Happens to Farm Waste?

Recycling from Farm Properties

In rural areas, many farms are not on the Council's kerbside collection route, so do not have refuse and recycling collected weekly. However, there are options available:

1. Glass bottles and jars, cans, paper, cardboard, plastic bottles and containers and metals can all be recycled via the transfer stations.
2. Official Council recycling or refuse bags can be purchased and left at agreed locations for Council collection, or wheelie bins obtained for annual fee.
3. Public recycling bins in towns can be used for glass bottles and jars, cans, paper, cardboard, plastic bottles and containers.

Information on where the official collection points and recycling bins are located is available by calling the Council offices or by visiting their website.

Plastic Agrichemical Containers - Agrecovery

Many of the products used on farms come in plastic containers, e.g. pesticides, veterinary medicines and agricultural chemicals.

In partnership with *Agrecovery*, a drop-off point for empty and tripled rinsed high density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic agrichemical containers (0 to 60 litres in size) has been provided at certain transfer stations. There are also publicised programmes of container take-back from farms. Website:

<http://www.agrecovery.co.nz/resources/sites-and-events/>

The containers are collected by *Agrecovery* and are shredded and recycled in New Zealand into protective covers for electrical cables.



Photo: Example of an Agrecovery collection container. Each shipping container holds about 1.25 tonnes of plastic.

To drop off plastic containers for recycling, they must first be triple rinsed, have their lids removed and be one of the named brands participating in the programme. See <http://www.agrecovery.co.nz/programmes/container-recycling/>

Food Waste

A staggering amount of food waste gets thrown away in NZ, when it really is not necessary. Those living on farms have a number of options for managing food waste:

1. Look to reduce home food wastage, through careful purchasing, opting to freeze left overs or convert into another meal.
2. Waste food can be converted into a resource on site by composting, using a wormery or bokashi composting. This is useful for meat and dairy wastes.
3. Feed fresh vegetable food waste to farm animals such as chickens or pigs; saving the need to purchase as much animal food, whilst reducing the volumes requiring disposal.

Scrap Metal and Batteries from Vehicles and Electric Fencing

Around the countryside, there are numerous piles of scrap metal, including unwanted farm machinery, fencing wire and scrap iron, on farms and lifestyle blocks.

Through recycling the unwanted metal, it can save the mining and quarrying of further natural resources, while the good appearance of farmed countryside is maintained.

Metal can be recycled via transfer stations but not all accept fencing wire. Alternatively, if there is a large quantity, merchants will often collect and, depending on prices at the time, may even pay for it.

Unwanted batteries from farm vehicles, machinery and electric fences are hazardous and should never be left lying on the ground. Lead and acid can leak from them and this is extremely dangerous if it leaches into the water course and can cause burns if it comes into contact with human or animal skin.

Old batteries can be brought into a transfer stations for free recycling; these will be safely stored by Council until there is a sufficient quantity to recycle.

Plasback

Plasback is a New Zealand-wide recycling programme, through which unwanted film packaging products from the agricultural and horticultural markets (silage bale wrap and silage pit covers) are recycled, e.g. into *Tuffboard* by Astron Plastics in Auckland.



www.plasback.co.nz

The programme is not restricted as any brand name can be accepted; this also includes plastic packaging waste e.g. feed and fertiliser bags (LDPE and PP), plastic packaging, and nets from the viticulture industry.

Once collected, plastic is consolidated at hubs around New Zealand then baled and shipped to plastic recycling plants.

Using an official scheme for recycling farm plastics prevents any 'need or excuse' to burn them. Remember burning plastics is illegal and can be reported to the Regional Council 0800 pollution hotline.

Engine Oil

Ever wondered what happens to engine oil from tractors and other farm machinery and vehicles?

Engine oil can be easily recycled, which is very important. This can stop it being tipped onto land or down drains, polluting the ground, watercourses and endangering wildlife.

Engine oil poured back into labelled bottles can be recycled via transfer stations, plus, to encourage its correct disposal, it is accepted for no charge.

When dropped off at the transfer stations, the engine oil is held in containers capable of holding up to 5000 litres. Each container has a 'double bund' around and below it to ensure any leaks or spills are safely contained. When collected, the oil is pumped out of the containers at the sites into a tank on the back of a truck, ready for transport for processing and reuse, including burning as an alternative boiler fuel.

Farm Waste Recycling Facts

- From 2007 to late 2016, the Agrecovery programme handled 1.4 million kilograms of plastic containers and safely disposed of 100,000 kilograms of unwanted chemicals.
- By mid-2016, Plasback had collected a total volume 7268 tonnes of plastics in the ten years since the scheme commenced.
- Some scrap merchants will collect larger quantities of scrap metal from farms – they will come to the farm.

What to Remember when Recycling Farm Waste

- When handling rusty scrap metal, barbed wire or old batteries, always wear gloves, and ensure your tetanus protection is up to date!
- When storing unwanted engine oil, always ensure first that the container re-used is secure (screw top), to prevent spills and leakages.

Class Challenges

1. Make a list of the types of farm waste and as a class, discuss how these could be managed responsibly.
As part of this discussion, consider what pollution results from burning plastics and also whether farm dump pits could result in leaching into nearby waterways and what the effects of this could be? As references, see <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/101034558/farmings-dirty-secret-thousands-of-tonnes-of-waste-buried-or-burned-each-year> and <http://www.agrecovery.co.nz/why-recycle-2/>
2. Produce a poster to promote the positive options for farm waste recycling instead of burning, burying or bulk stockpiles; then perhaps a local farm supplies store would display it?
3. Find a local farmer to interview regarding how they manage waste and ask if and how they use any of the farm waste recycling programmes; perhaps they would be happy to show you or send photos?