



# Managing Food Scraps as Animal Feed

This tipsheet was developed by WasteWi\$e, EPA's voluntary program which assists businesses in taking cost-effective actions to reduce solid waste, through waste prevention, recycling, and buying recycled products.

For restaurants, hotels, and companies with foodservice operations, collecting food scraps for use as livestock feed can be a practical option and a great WasteWi\$e goal. Even if your company is located in a city, there may be farms located nearby that can use your scraps. Reusing food scraps as hog and cattle feed diverts waste from the landfill and can save your company money in hauling and disposal costs. For example, WasteWi\$e partner 3M saves more than \$30,000 annually by sending its food scraps to a nearby farm. Over two years, this action has diverted 90,000 pounds of food from disposal.

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## ***Safe Storage and Handling Procedures***

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**C**ollecting food scraps for use as animal feed requires less effort on the part of the producer than you might imagine. All you will need to do is separate the food scraps from other waste materials and keep the food covered and refrigerated (or stored in a cool place) until a farmer is able to pick it up. Some farmers will provide you with reusable airtight containers for storing your food scraps until they are picked up. Certain foods, such as coffee grounds and scraps with high concentrations of salt, should be separated from food you plan to donate, as they can be harmful to livestock.

## ***Permitting and Other Requirements***

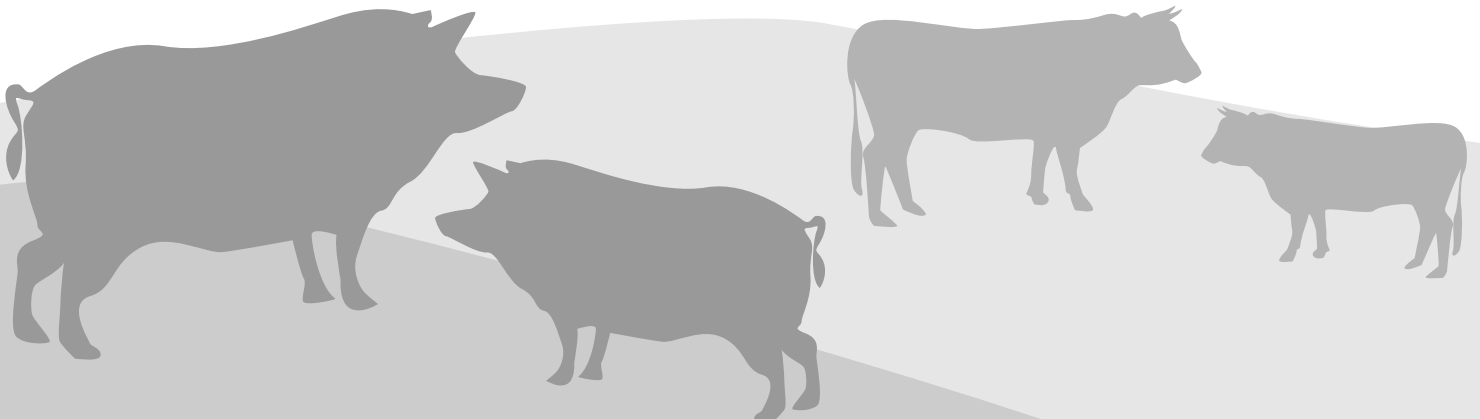
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**T**here are no known permitting requirements for donors of food scraps. It is, however, important that you find a farmer that has a permit to accept commercial food scraps for feeding to livestock. The 1980 federal Swine Health Protection Act requires that farmers boil any food scraps containing meat before they can be used as livestock feed. State laws regarding treatment of non-meat scraps used as animal feed vary; some states require that the scraps be boiled, while others impose no regulations. Some states prohibit scraps from cafeterias, restaurants, or grocery stores from being fed to animals. Check with your state veterinarian to find out if reusing food scraps as animal feed is permitted in your state.

## ***Locating a Farmer***

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**I**n setting up a food scrap reuse program you need to coordinate your activities with a local farmer. Only certain farms are licensed to prepare and feed commercial food scraps to livestock. If feeding food scraps to livestock is permitted in your state, your state veterinarian should be able to assist you in locating a licensed farmer. You may be able to find an organization in your area, such as your county extension office or a private hauler, that coordinates activities with farmers. A local farmers' market may also help you find a farmer. In addition, you may want to run an advertisement in your local newspaper.



***Before you establish a program for collecting food scraps for animal feed, you should evaluate its feasibility. You may want to consider the following points:***

***Is the quantity of food scraps sufficient to make the food reuse project worthwhile?***

— Different farmers may have varying demand for food scraps. Some may be willing to accept any amount of food, regardless of size, while others may not be willing to collect small quantities. Before you locate a farmer, try to estimate the volume of food scraps you generate daily or weekly—this may determine what kind of arrangements you ultimately negotiate.

***Do you generate the food scraps on a routine basis? (Daily, weekly, etc.)***

— Your food scrap generation may vary on a daily basis, producing higher volumes on some days than others. Some companies may hold special weekly events that are responsible for the bulk of their food scraps. Evaluating the frequency with which you generate food scraps will help you determine if collecting food scraps for animal feed is a feasible option. It will also help you establish a pick-up schedule with a farmer if you decide to collect your scraps.

***Can the material be kept fresh until it can be picked up by a farmer?***

— Many farmers will collect your food scraps daily and provide you with airtight containers for storing the scraps. Farmers usually require that the food is kept in either a refrigerator or other cool place until pick-up. If you make arrangements with a farmer who does not collect scraps daily, ask the farmer if you need to take any additional precautions to keep the food fresh to accommodate a less frequent pick-up schedule.

***Do you have adequate storage space to hold the material until it can be picked up?***

— Storage containers for food scraps can be quite large (55-gallon drums or 32-gallon barrels). You may want to designate a storage space in advance and factor your space availability into pick-up and other arrangements with a farmer.

***Some companies may be able to sell their scraps to farmers, while others may need to pay a pick-up fee. Pick-up fees tend to be nominal and are usually far less than landfill tipping fees. Thus, even if there is a pick-up charge, it still may be cost-effective for you to collect your food scraps for animal feed.***



## **Bell Atlantic: A Donation Success Story**

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**I**n March 1993 Bell Atlantic, a WasteWiSe charter partner in East Orange, New Jersey, began donating food scraps from its cafeteria, which feeds 600 employees daily, to local farmers. The company had made earlier attempts to establish a food scraps donation program but encountered difficulties in finding farmers that were permitted to prepare and feed cafeteria scraps to their livestock. This all changed when, at a conference of state recyclers, Bell Atlantic found a local business that acted as a broker between companies and farmers to facilitate the donation process. Bell Atlantic's cafeteria employees simply began separating food scraps from other cafeteria trash and placing them in covered plastic barrels in a special collection area for pick-up; no extra time or work was necessary. Bell Atlantic employees were quite enthusiastic about their new effort: several of them even had their picture taken with a pig who is fed with company food scraps! According to Maureen Burke, recycling coordinator at Bell Atlantic, the key to a successful donation program is finding someone with a reliable pick-up schedule. Apparently, the company found just that: Bell Atlantic donated 10,000 pounds of food scraps as animal feed in 1994.

## **3M Turns Food Scraps into Cash**

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**3**M, a WasteWiSe charter partner in St. Paul, Minnesota, discovered that turning food scraps and edible oils into hog feed not only diverts waste from the landfill, but also saves the company money. 3M Food Services, which prepares thousands of meals daily for 12,000 employees, found that disposing of the company's food preparation waste was a messy and costly endeavor and began to explore creative disposal solutions. The company hired an environmental consultant, who suggested using food scraps and oil as hog feed, and located a family farming operation experienced in collecting and preparing reclaimed food. To increase understanding between the groups, farm employees toured 3M Food Services, and 3M employees visited the farm. According to Bob Blanchard at 3M Food Services, educating Food Services employees was the key to the program's success. Says Blanchard: "They understood the scraps were going to feed hogs and recognized the importance of keeping paper, glass, and metal from mixing with the food scraps." In the program's first two years, 90,000 pounds of food scraps and edible oils were used as hog feed and diverted from the landfill or incinerator. This has translated into a savings of more than \$30,000 for 3M.

## **Resources**

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**I**f you are interested in collecting your food scraps for livestock feed, you should contact:

- Your county agricultural extension, where available
- Your state veterinarian
- Your county health department

These sources should be able to provide you with information regarding your state's laws governing food scraps for animal feed and may be able to help you locate a licensed farmer. You can generally find a listing for your state veterinarian in the phone book under your state's Department of Agriculture or Board of Animal Health.

*The WasteWiSe program gratefully acknowledges the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) for its help in preparing this document.*

***For more information on the WasteWiSe program, call 800 EPA-WISE***