



# County of San Diego

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION

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## MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL FOR VETERINARY PRACTICES

*Medical waste* is governed by the California Medical Waste Management Act (MWMA) and San Diego County Ordinance. Waste from a typical veterinary practice that is regulated as medical waste is, in almost all cases, limited to sharps waste and other waste that is contaminated due to direct contact with a zoonotic disease. Typical veterinary practices will also generate waste that may be classified as *hazardous* waste.

### **What waste from a veterinary practice must be managed as *medical waste*?**

Regulated *medical waste* means waste that meets both of two conditions:

- The waste must be generated as a result of the diagnosis, treatment, or immunization of animals or research pertaining to the diagnosis, treatment, or immunization of animals  
*and*
- It must be either *sharps* or *biohazardous* waste.

### **What is *sharps waste*?**

*Sharps* are devices with acute rigid corners, edges, or protuberances capable of cutting or piercing. *Sharps waste* includes, but is not limited to, hypodermic needles, blades, acupuncture needles, and root canal files. Broken glass items are considered sharps waste when they are contaminated with biohazardous waste.

### **What is *biohazardous waste*?**

Biohazardous waste is waste that the attending veterinarian suspects is contaminated with infectious agents that are known to be contagious to humans. Animal parts, tissues, fluids, carcasses, vaccines or cultures could be biohazardous waste.

Biohazardous waste also includes:

- Articles such as IV bags, tubing, and tissues that are contaminated with small (non-pourable) amounts of toxic chemicals like formaldehyde or chemotherapeutic agents.
- Pharmaceutical waste that is toxic or ignitable.

### **How should a veterinarian practice dispose of regulated *medical waste*?**

There are several options for disposal of *medical waste*:

- Disposal through a registered *medical waste* hauler,
- Mail-in sharps disposal (sharps waste only),
- Use of an alternative treatment technology approved by the California Department of Health Services, such as encapsulation, which is used for *sharps waste*,
- Treatment onsite by a steam autoclave prior to disposal as medical solid waste.

*“Environmental and public health through leadership, partnership, and science”*

# VETERINARY WASTE DISPOSAL GUIDE

This diagram is intended as a disposal guide for some types of regulated waste.

It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive list of all regulated wastes.

## Regulated Medical (Sharps) Waste

Needles, blades, root canal files, broken glass contaminated with biohazardous waste.

- Sharps container, treated by steam autoclave or disposed of via a registered hauler.
- Encapsulation
- Mail back sharps



## Regulated Medical (Biohazardous) Waste

Animal blood in containers and/or body parts infected with zoonotic diseases, zoonotic vaccines, cultures, **trace** chemotherapeutic agents.

- Red Bag stored inside a rigid container.
- Treated by steam autoclave or disposed of via a registered hauler.



## Medical Solid Waste

Treated or decontaminated medical waste, dressings with non-liquid blood, non-contaminated body parts, waste of apparent medical origin.

- Regular trash disposed into a secured/locked dumpster or enclosure.



## Liquid Medical Waste

Body fluids, liquid blood, urine and other non-hazardous fluids.

- Sanitary sewer system.



## Hazardous Waste

**Bulk chemotherapeutic agents, iodine, alcohols, cleaners that are corrosive, (with a pH  $\geq$  12.5 or  $\leq$  2.0), cold sterilants.**  
**Lead foil, sludge from silver recovery unit (waste resulting from treating X-ray fixer onsite).**

- Container with a hazardous waste label, a tight fitting lid and removed off site under a manifest by a registered hazardous waste hauler.
- Store in an appropriate container and maintain records that indicate that the waste is managed by a legitimate recycler.
- If not recycled, these wastes must be stored, labeled, and disposed of as a hazardous waste, as described above.



For additional information about medical and hazardous waste contact the Hazardous Materials Duty Desk at (858) 505-6880 or visit HMD's website at <http://www.sdcdeh.org>

For ways to reduce waste through pollution prevention please contact HMD's Pollution Prevention Specialist at (858) 505-6881.