

Organisation of Animal Waste Management in Estonia

Animal waste management needs improvement

The Report of the National Audit Office to the Riigikogu, 1 October 2007

Summary of the results of the audit

The objective of the audit was to evaluate whether the management of dead farm animals and animal by-products is functioning, ensuring due waste disposal.

In addition, the National Audit Office analysed whether the state funding for the management of animal waste corresponds to the rules of the European Union and also the impact of the rules on facilitating the competition in the area of waste management.

Animal waste is the main source of the spread of infectious animal diseases. When a suspect animal is unduly disposed of, the infection may be transmitted to healthy animals and cause extensive outbreaks of diseases. The spread of infection from animals which are contaminated to people is not excluded, either. For example, in the 1990s more than one hundred people died because of the extensively spreading mad cow disease killing millions of animals in the United Kingdom.

Animal waste is hazardous for the environment, causing the pollution of groundwater and the spread of parasites.

In order to prevent the spread of infection and the contamination of the environment, there are strict uniform rules valid in the European Union as regards the management of animal waste, which should ensure due disposal of all animal waste.

In the case of infringement of the requirements of animal waste management, the European Union may to a great extent limit the export of meat and milk products from Estonia, whereby the producers may lose income for up to EEK 1.9 billion per year.

The audit revealed that part of animal waste is not duly disposed. The Ministry of Agriculture has established initial conditions for the management of animal by-products, but has not paid enough attention to the further development of the waste management system and to checking its functioning.

- **The state does not know how much animal waste is produced and how much of it is actually managed.** Although there are necessary data in the national databases about many farm animals, these data are not used for specifying dead and utilised animals. Data about dead pigs, horses and food waste of animal origin produced during international passenger travel is partially or totally missing from the state databases.
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- **The infrastructure created by the state has not been established considering the aim of final disposal of animal waste.** Although the state has spent almost EEK 100 million on the building of a plant for animal waste management, it does not provide a solution for the liquidation of waste residues (meat-and-bone meal and residual fat). Thus, harmless disposal of meat-and-bone meal has not been ensured now.
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- **The system of animal waste management is not sustainable.** The capacity of the state-owned plant for animal waste management has been exhausted by now and in the case of increase in the volume of waste or breakdown of the plant, there is no possibility in Estonia to dispose of waste harmlessly.
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- **In 2006, 12% of bovine, 65% of sheep and 60% of goat cadavers were not managed according to requirements.** The situation in Hiiumaa is especially bad, where 72% of dead bovine animals remained unmanaged.
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- **Supervision of the fulfilment of requirements for animal waste management is insufficient.** The Veterinary and Food Board performing supervision over the fulfilment of the requirements has not checked with constant efficiency all the parts of the waste management chain, including in animal holdings and disposing facilities.
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- **The organisation of state financing does not foster competition.** Preferring the company Loomsete Jäätmete Käitlemise AS at providing public financing to the producers has obstructed the occurrence of competition and the stabilisation of the price for the service, and therefore the financing from the national budget is constantly increasing.

The answer by the Minister of Agriculture:

The Ministry of Agriculture agrees that there is a need for compiling forecasts about the amount of all animal waste requiring disposal in the coming years. The collection of data has started already.

The Ministry does not consider it necessary to put an additional obligation of waste reporting on the waste holders, as the current system is adequate both for ensuring supervision over waste management and for specifying the amount of waste produced. The Ministry will take measures in cooperation with the Veterinary and Food Board for ensuring more efficient checking of the fulfilment of the registration obligations of the keepers.

The Ministry will in principle agree with the establishment of two to three places for a landfill in Estonia for the case of emergency disease-control. Efforts for finding such places have been started already.

The Ministry is of the opinion that state financing should facilitate investments into the production of bio-energy from animal by-products. In addition, measures must be taken for ensuring the due management of the food waste produced at international transport.

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