

Food Residuals Banned from Disposal in Trash

Vermont’s Universal Recycling (UR) Law bans “food residuals” from the trash, which are also commonly referred to as leftovers, food scraps, food waste, and excess food.

The UR Law ([10 V.S.A. § 6602 \(31\)](#)) defines “food residual” as “... source separated and uncontaminated material that is derived from processing or discarding of food and that is recyclable, in a manner consistent with section 6605k of this title. [Section [6605k](#) refers to feeding people, feeding animals, composting, and anaerobic digestion.] Food residual may include pre-consumer and postconsumer food scraps. ‘Food residual’ does not mean meat and meat-related products when the food residuals are composted by a resident on site.”

The UR Law does allow businesses and institutions with established food waste separation programs, that include regular staff training, to dispose of an insignificant amount of food residuals (“de minimis,” [10 V.S.A. § 6605k\(b\)\(1\)](#)), such as:

- Occasional small amounts of food waste that are accidentally thrown in the trash
- Small packages of food waste, such as one-ounce packets, that would be extremely time-consuming to de-package and too small for depackaging machines

Occasionally, businesses ask the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) whether a certain material is a food residual and thus banned from the trash. This table outlines the answers to these questions.

People with questions about what are considered food residuals, or whether certain food residuals could be considered insignificant or “de minimis,” are encouraged to contact the DEC Solid Waste Program by [email](#) or at 802-828-1138.

Material Type	Banned from the Trash?	Details
Infant Formula (powder or liquid)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a human food. The intent of the “food residual” disposal ban was to address human food. • Depending on whether it is solid or liquid, it can be composted or anaerobically digested. It can be used as animal feed in certain circumstances.
Meat & bones, including seafood and shells	Yes, unless resident composts onsite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents who compost in their yards can dispose of meat and bones in the trash. Businesses that manage their food scraps onsite must have a system to keep their meat and bones out of the trash. If it is a small quantity of meat and bones, one option is to keep them in the freezer and bring them to a food scrap drop-off.

Material Type	Banned from the Trash?	Details
Fats, Used Cooking Oils, And Greases (FOG)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fats, oils, and greases (FOG) are considered food residuals if they are generated by the processing of food and are kept separate from the wastewater system at the point of origin. For example, fryolator grease from a restaurant is considered a food residual if it is stored in a grease tank that is not connected to the wastewater system and it can be pumped and transported to treatment. Restaurant grease that goes down the drain with wash water is not considered a food residual.
Spent Grain from Breweries	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is derived from the processing of food and may be composted, fed to animals, or even processed into quality food for humans in some cases.
Food & Beverages in Glass Packaging	Case by Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are human foods and should be donated to people to consume rather than disposed in the trash. If not suitable for human consumption, they might be considered for disposal as “de minimis,” on a case-by-case basis.
Consumer Packaged Beverages	Case by Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beverages are considered food residuals. Some beverages, like liquor, are regulated and may require certain management that make them unsuitable for animal feed, composting, or anaerobic digestion.
Food Stabilizers, Preservatives, Additives, Salt, Nutritional and Dietary Supplements	Case by Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While some of these are not considered food residuals, certain additives or ingredients are considered food residuals because they are human food that can be managed as animal feed, composted, or anaerobically digested (e.g., whey/soy protein, sugar, fruit pectin, onion powder, etc.).
Contaminated or Off-Spec Food (e.g., chemical, biological, petroleum, fire, or flood contamination)	Case by Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off spec and contaminated food is considered banned food residual if it is appropriate for animal feed, composting, or anaerobic digestion. Compost and digester facilities have issued certificates of disposal/destruction for generators, insurance companies, or others. Certain chemical or biological contamination, or physical contaminants like fire debris, may render these materials unsuitable for animal feed, compost, or anaerobic digestion, in which case they may be disposed in trash.

Material Type	Banned from the Trash?	Details
Slaughterhouse Waste, Carcasses, and Offal	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slaughter wastes like carcasses, offal, blood, and hides are not considered food residuals (and thus may be disposed in the trash). However certain compost facilities with appropriate permits can compost animal mortalities and slaughter wastes. • Pre- and post-consumer meat and seafood trimmings, like a supermarket or restaurant’s trimmed fat, bones, or skin, are considered banned food residuals and can be composted, anaerobically digested, or managed through renderers.
Pet Food	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intent of the “food residual” disposal ban was to address human food. • It may be composted, fed to animals if suitable, or anaerobically digested.
Pet Bedding and Manure	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These materials are not considered food residuals or leaf and yard debris (which is also banned from the trash). These materials are often accepted for composting.