

Q: Can I have a mushroom growing and/or composting operation on my farm?

A: According to the *Zoning Bylaw*, the growing of mushrooms is classified as an Agricultural Use, and is permitted in the **A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and A6 Zones**. A mushroom growing farm is also permitted an on-farm mushroom composting use when a minimum of 20% of the finished compost is produced **and** used on the same legal parcel where the mushroom composting operation is located. The *Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation (ALC Regulation)* also requires at least 50% of the finished compost to be used on the same farm. However, the ALC Regulation defines "farm" to include more than one legal parcel. You must comply with both the municipal *Zoning Bylaw* and the provincial *ALC Regulation*.

Q: Can I have a mushroom composting operation on my farm without growing mushrooms on the same property?

A: No. In accordance with the City's *Farm (Mushroom Growing Operation Storm Water and Waste Management and On-Farm Composting) Bylaw*, mushroom composting operations must have mushroom growing taking place on the same legal property where the composting is taking place.

Q: What can I do if I am unable to meet the minimum requirement of 20% of the finished composted being used on the same legal parcel where it is produced?

A: If the minimum requirement of 20% of the finished compost use cannot be met, then the land owner must apply for a non-farm use application for the property, which will be considered by council and then, if endorsed, by the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC).

To operate a Commercial Mushroom Composting Facility, if the ALC approves a non-farm use application, the subject property must be rezoned to the **Agricultural and Commercial Mushroom Composting Zone (A6)**, which has a minimum lot size of 7.3 ha (18.0 acres) and has the following required setbacks for buildings and structures:

- 30 m from all lots lines, residential uses and wells;
- 15 m from the natural boundary of a watercourse;
- 500 m from the Agricultural Land Reserve boundary, where the boundary abuts the Urban Development Area Boundary as shown within the Official Community Plan; and
- 15 m setback for non-manure based raw material storage from all lot lines.

The **Agricultural and Commercial Mushroom Composting Zone (A6)** also establishes several conditions of use for a Commercial Mushroom Composting Facility, which must be designed and constructed such that the facility:

- a. Is on asphalt or concrete, or other similar impermeable surface, that prevents the release of leachate into the environment;
- b. Is graded to prevent the pooling of water where agricultural waste or mushroom compost is received, processed or stored;
- c. Is designed to prevent run-off water from entering the areas where agricultural waste or mushroom compost is received, processed or stored;
- d. Includes covered storage for organic materials, except baled straw or hay, to prevent exposure to precipitation;
- e. Includes an enclosed building with an aerated floor, designed to ensure the mushroom compost is maintained in an aerobic condition, and with a negative pressure differential between the inside and outside of the building in which the composting process occurs with air emissions directed to collection and treatment in the manner described in (g) below;

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f. Includes an enclosed facility or facilities maintained under negative pressure for all nitrogen rich leachate with air emissions directed to collection and treatment in the manner described in (g) below; and

g. Includes an air emission collection and treatment system, designed and certified by a professional engineer registered to practice in British Columbia whose area of professional specialty includes the design of these systems, which consists of a wet scrubber and biofilter to reduce air contaminants to a concentration that will not cause pollution.

The operation of a commercial Mushroom Composting Facility shall:

a. Only conduct the pre-wetting of straw or hay on an aerated floor or in a dunk tank within an enclosed storage facility as described in (f) above;

b. Only store pre-wetting straw or hay on an aerated floor;

c. Move the mixture of the wetter straw or hay, other organic materials and gypsum and the nitrogen rich material into the enclosed building described in (e) above, within the same calendar day as the day of mixing;

d. Perform all other stages of the composting process, after mixing the straw or hay with the nitrogen rich material, in the enclosed building described in (e) above;

e. Only be conducted as designed; and

f. Comply with any requirements of the Ministry of Environment.

Q: What additional information is required when I submit my drawings to the City's building department for review and approval?

A: In accordance with the City's *Farm (Mushroom Growing Operation Storm Water and Waste Management and On-Farm Composting) Bylaw*, any mushroom growing operation must submit the following plans as part of your application, each prepared by a professional engineer who is licensed to practice in British Columbia and is familiar with the subject area of each plan:

- Storm water management plan; and
- Wastewater management plan.

If on-farm mushroom composting is planned for a property, then you must **also** submit an odour management plan.

The City typically requires the drawings submitted for the aforementioned plans to be signed and sealed by a professional engineer who has accreditation from APEGBC to seal civil engineering plans.

Q: Are there any monitoring requirements once my operation is up and running?

A: Yes. In accordance with the City's *Farm (Mushroom Growing Operation Storm Water and Waste Management and On-Farm Composting) Bylaw*, effluent discharged from the wastewater treatment system must be sampled and analyzed by an independent certified laboratory. Air emissions must also be monitored to verify that the treatment system is working correctly. Monitoring and reports must be submitted:

- At 3 months and 9 months following commencement of operation; and
- Every 12 months following that.

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FAQ

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Q: Are there any fees associated with submissions of required management plans or monitoring reports?

- A: Yes. In accordance with the City's *Farm (Mushroom Growing Operation Storm Water and Waste Management and On-Farm Composting) Bylaw*, administration fees payable to the City of Abbotsford include:
- \$300 for each wastewater management plan submission;
 - \$75 for each wastewater monitoring report submission;
 - \$75 for each odour monitoring report submission.

There are no administration fees associated with the submissions of storm water management plans or odour management plans.

Q: Do I need to still submit my management plans and monitoring reports to provincial authorities since I am already submitting them to the City?

- A: Yes. In addition to meeting City requirements, mushroom composting facilities must also submit the management plans and monitoring reports to the Ministry of Environment, in compliance with the provincial *Mushroom Composting Facility Regulation*. It is the property owner's responsibility to ensure accordance with all municipal, provincial and federal acts and regulations.

Q: Can I discharge or pump brown water or process water into a watercourse, stream, creek, storm sewer, ditch or natural ground?

- A: No. In accordance with the City's *Farm (Mushroom Growing Operation Storm Water and Waste Management and On-Farm Composting) Bylaw*, uncontaminated stormwater runoff from farms is permitted to enter the municipal drainage system, provided that a storm water management plan has been approved. Wastewater, brown water, process water or other contaminated runoff must be contained onsite. If wastewater, brown water, process water or other contaminated runoff is intended to be applied to natural ground or discharged to a watercourse, stream, creek, or ditch, then approval in the form of a waste discharge permit must be obtained from the Ministry of Environment, in accordance with the provincial *Waste Management Act*.

Q: What rules or regulations apply to a mushroom growing and composting operation?

- A: Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operations. The provincial *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the provincial *Public Health Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and the regulations under those Acts.

The federal *Fisheries Act* prohibits the discharge of deleterious substances such as agricultural wastes and fertilizers into waters frequented by fish.

The provincial *Environmental Management Act* protects the soil, water and air environment from pollution. The provincial *Mushroom Composting Pollution Prevention Regulation* under the *Environmental Management Act* sets minimum standards for composting.

The municipal *Farm (Mushroom Growing Operation Storm Water and Waste Management and On-Farm Composting) Bylaw* sets out the management plans, monitoring and setback requirements for such an operation. The municipal *Zoning Bylaw* prescribes zoning requirements for establishing a mushroom growing and composting operation. The municipal *Waterways Protection Bylaw* prohibits the fouling of any watercourses.

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