



# Ecological Sanitation International

EcologicalSanitationInternational.com

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## HUMANURE

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This information is being written by and provided by Joe Jenkins, author of the Humanure Handbook and the Compost Toilet Handbook. Joe gets emails and phone calls almost daily asking him questions about compost and compost piles. However, Joe struggles every day to reduce the number of emails in his inbox to below 100 and has not succeeded in achieving this goal in many months. Joe doesn't have time to respond to most questions, since, among other things, he manages five businesses almost single handedly. He also travels, gardens, maintains a homestead, and is still writing books. Joe could spend all of his working time just answering emails and phone calls, while ignoring all of the other responsibilities in his life. He hopes you understand why he is not answering your email with a direct personal response.

### **#1 FAQ: My Pile is not getting hot!**

This question is very common. Often it seems like the person asking the question has not read the Humanure Handbook but is wanting the author of the book to personally review the person's situation and manage it for them. Instead, let's try to understand what's happening with your pile.

Compost is a biological process. It is affected by many varying influences such as physical location (Mongolia? Dallas?); ambient temperature (is it winter or summer?); materials being added to the pile (can bacteria eat it? Is the organic material readily available to bacteria or are you using wood shavings or other dried wood material that bacteria can't eat very easily?). How big is the pile (are you just starting it or have you been collecting material for months)? How often do you "feed" the compost pile? If you feed it regularly and sufficiently, it can maintain a fairly hot temperature (i.e. above 120F or 55C). Otherwise, it won't. How much experience do you have with composting? The more experience you have, the less likely you will be confused about the process. And so on.

For example, people say their pile is not getting hot. How do you know? They say it doesn't look or feel hot. Get a compost thermometer, then determine what the temperature is.

One person (with a compost thermometer) said her giant compost pile would not heat up. It was in Arizona. Joe said hose it down. She did. It heated up almost immediately.

Others say they segregate out most of their food and give it to worms. Others say they segregate urine. But you don't need to segregate anything. You can have one compost pile and you use it for everything. The worms will find the compost pile.



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Some ask if their compost is too wet. If it's above ground, it's not too wet. It's too wet if it's underwater. Bacteria don't walk; they swim. Your compost can't be too wet. If anything, it's probably too dry. Dish a shallow concave basin underneath your compost pile (when you start it) to allow for any extra liquid to pool should you be adding too much liquid. Also use a "biological sponge" under your pile. If you're adding too much liquid, balance it by adding more organic material, especially dry stuff like hay or straw.

Not getting enough nitrogen in your compost? Add more green material if it's available. Humanure should provide enough nitrogen, but it composts better if you also add all your other organic material, like food scraps, urine, and garden residues.

Can you compost animal poop? You can compost entire animals. Why wouldn't you be able to compost their poop? Watch the videos on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/@jcjenkins01> – look for the appropriate playlist).

Can compost made with humanure and/or dead animals be used for food gardens? You did not read the book(s). The Humanure Handbook 4<sup>th</sup> edition and the Compost Toilet Handbook both address this issue in detail. You can read the Humanure Handbook for free online at [HumanureHandbook.com](http://HumanureHandbook.com) (chapter by chapter on the "contents" page). You can also download either book in their entirety in PDF format for a small fee. There are various foreign language editions available, some for free download at [Humanurehandbook.com](http://Humanurehandbook.com). Or go to **CompostToiletHandbook.com** and you will find all of Joe's books including PDF downloads.

There once was a message board at [HumanureHandbook.com](http://HumanureHandbook.com) for many years which had thousands of conversations. That was the place to go to ask questions. However, the software was "open source" and when the tech support ended it became non-functional.

The document you're now reading is a work in progress and Joe will no doubt be adding to it as new questions arise.

Joe Jenkins

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