

Curbside Composting FAQs

Did you know?

Coaldale's compost is transported to a processing facility in Taber. Due to industry-wide changes, this facility no longer accepts plastic bags labeled as "compostable" or "biodegradable", **effective on January 1, 2021.**



This means "compostable" plastic bags can no longer be used in Coaldale's green bins. We understand this isn't ideal, but it's also a change that is happening all over the country. In fact, the Town of Taber stopped allowing compostable bags in their own green bin program in November of this year. Many other (larger) municipalities, such as Okotoks and Airdrie, use the Taber facility as well and have to follow suit. Even the City of Vancouver does not allow for the use of these compostable bags.

The Town of Coaldale is on track to produce about 3,200,000 kgs of waste this year (not including drop off or commercial waste). This breaks down to approximately 1,500 tonnes of garbage, 500 tonnes of recycling, and 1,200 tonnes of compost.

Why can't I use plastic bags labeled as "compostable" or "biodegradable"?

Over time operators have noticed that the bags simply aren't breaking down properly the way the producers of the bags suggested they would. Testing has shown that only large-scale facilities are capable of generating enough heat to properly compost this material. The bags ultimately end up contaminating the rest of the compostable materials in the green bin.

What can I use instead of the plastic bags?

Kitchen pails do not require any liners; you can always throw your waste directly into the pail. Paper options exist (local retailers are aware of the change and are moving to stock more of them) or alternatives such as newspaper or cardboard can be an effective choice.

Why can't we just build our own facility?

Building our own facility likely wouldn't solve the problem as it still wouldn't be capable of effectively breaking down the material. The City of Calgary facility utilizes a process that does allow for the breakdown of these materials, however they are not accepting waste from outside sources, and Coaldale is simply too small to afford a facility of that scale.

Is this happening because we switched contracted haulers?

No. GFL, just like our previous contracted hauler, simply brings the material to a processing facility; the Town pays the bill (measured by weight) for accessing that facility. This would be true if the Town had remained with the previous contractor, and would also be true if the Town used it's own trucks to pick up waste.

Why don't we just get rid of the green bins altogether?

The green bin program isn't just good for the environment, it actually saves the Town a lot of money because green bin waste is so much cheaper to process than black bin waste. We currently pay \$115/tonne to dump black bin vs. \$53.50/tonne for green bin. If all the green bin waste went into the black bin, we'd spend about \$70,000/year more on tipping fees.

In the longer term, black bin tipping rates are anticipated to continue to increase, whereas green bin rates are expected to remain stable. The fact of the matter is that it is simply getting more expensive to produce waste, so moving away from green bin would end up being an expensive choice for the Town.

Where can I learn more?

More information is available online at coaldale.ca/waste. The site includes a short video that includes a discussion of the challenges with these compostable bag products. We encourage you to give it a watch!

The Town will be sending out a brochure in January 2021 to help you sort your solid waste materials, or you can download the CoalDale Waste Companion App at the App Store or Google Play.

Where do we go from here?

Please keep in mind that this is not just affecting CoalDale; this is an industry-wide change that impacts communities across Canada. The Taber facility is simply the most recent facility to make this change. Abandoning the compost program is not a cost-effective solution now or in the future; it simply isn't the financially responsible position, on top of being worse for the environment. The Town will continue to investigate long term solutions, but in the meantime, residents will have to make adjustments to their at-home composting.

We understand that this change is not convenient. Due to the short notice of this announcement, we also recognize that plastic "compostable" bags may not be entirely removed from your green bins by January 1 (we certainly don't expect you to fish out any bags in your green bin placed there prior to this announcement!). However, we ask that you start making adjustments to comply with these new measures and hope that despite these changes you continue striving to make the most out of our green bin program.

