



## Horse Care Info Sheet

# Final Goodbye

It is wise to plan out one's options ahead of time to help guide us when we're faced with the painful prospect of having to "put down" or euthanize a horse. Your veterinarian can help you be more objective and advise you on what to expect, which can make the final decision a little easier.

Circumstances to consider where euthanasia of a horse may be a practical and responsible decision:

- An incurable disease – progressive or transmissible
- Inoperable colic or other untreatable injury/condition
- Chronic, severe lameness
- A severe, traumatic injury
- Debilitation caused by old age and/or declining health
- A foal born with a serious defect (if untreatable) that would affect its quality of life
- Behavioural traits that may pose a risk or danger to humans
- The inability to financially care for a sick or incapacitated horse

Questions to discuss with your veterinarian to allow you to be objective as possible in order to help determine your horse's options:

- How much suffering (pain and discomfort) is the horse experiencing and if any, what are its chances for recovery?
- What "quality of life" is achievable for the horse?
- Can the care necessary for the horse's condition be provided and successfully maintained?
- What veterinary costs will be incurred throughout treatment and recovery?

## Methods of Euthanasia

While an incredibly difficult decision, euthanasia is a kinder option than allowing a horse to suffer whether it's an age-related ailment or it's seriously ill. The method must be "quick, cause minimal pain or distress and render the horse immediately unconscious."

Acceptable euthanization methods (according to the Code of Practice) include:

- Lethal injection (chemical) administered by a veterinarian, is one of the most common methods performed
- Penetrating captive bolt deployed by a trained individual
- Free bullet via a gun executed by a skilled individual

## Is Your Horse Insured?

If you have an insurance policy on your horse, it's important that you contact your insurance agent beforehand to discuss the specifics concerning the policy. Some policies require that specific actions take place either prior to or immediately following euthanasia in order that the policy is effective in order to make a claim.

It's important to:

- Review your insurance policy beforehand and follow any necessary requirements as instructed
- Keep an up-to-date copy of your insurance policy readily available at the barn with both the emergency and policy numbers should an emergency occur.

## Deadstock Disposal

When discussing euthanasia options with your vet, disposal methods should also be taken into consideration in order for prompt removal and disposal of the body. Decisions regarding proper disposal and management options can vary, and the laws that govern them can differ according to where you reside. It is recommended that you check with your municipal bylaws beforehand.

Deadstock disposal options include:

- Burying on your farm or boarding stable property should the horse be boarded out (municipal laws may prevent this in some areas)
- Burial at a pet cemetery that accepts large animals
- Cremation with or without the ashes returned
- Deadstock collection and disposal through a rendering company
- Proper composting on the farm or through a deadstock composting company (see [www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/09-025.htm](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/engineer/facts/09-025.htm))
- Incineration operated by a licensed incinerator



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