



Euthanasia

Euthanasia is always a difficult subject to contemplate, but the more you have thought about it and the better informed you are, the more likely you are to come to terms with this ordeal. This leaflet will inform you about some of the options you have at the time you have decided to have your horse put down.

The most difficult decision in your horse's life is how you might have to end it, and when. It is important to think about when you might make this decision while your animal is still in good health. Many people around you will try to advise you about when they would make the final decision, but bear in mind that they well make a different decision when they are in your situation. Discuss your individual circumstances with whomever at the practice you feel most comfortable with. The decision is ultimately yours, and even the vet cannot make it for you unless there is inhumane suffering.

Location

Unless it is an emergency situation you can decide on the location for euthanasia.

At home - The vet will visit your horse in familiar surroundings, but you must provide help to make the procedure smooth for your horse. A friend or livery owner could assist the vet. It is important to make sure that access to the field or stable yard is suitable for the collection vehicle. Try to find a quiet place and warn other people at the yard of what is happening and when.

At the Hospital - This obviously requires the horse to be transported, but if your horse travels well, allows you to say goodbye and leave your horse. It also allows you to remove the horse from well-meaning, but sometimes interfering friends and advisors.

Both methods of euthanasia are painless and fast to the horse

Selecting an appropriate method

There are two methods of euthanasia. Both choices are painless and fast to the horse, but shooting tends to be less peaceful for the owner.

Lethal Injection

A sedative will be administered prior to the injection. The horse is then injected intravenously (into the vein) with a lethal overdose of anaesthetic drugs causing the horse to lose consciousness and eventually collapse. If this method of euthanasia is used, or if the horse had been on drugs prior to being put down then the options for disposal are limited.

Shooting

This must be pre-booked as vets are no longer permitted to carry a gun unless they are on their way to a specific euthanasia. Sedation may be given before the shooting. After the horse has gone down, there will be some involuntary movements of the legs and bleeding from the head.

Arrangements for disposal

The practice has contacts for service providers that can dispose of the body. When the horse has had any drugs administered, the carcass can only be cremated, incinerated or buried if the local authority allows it. If your horse is cremated, you can choose to pay for an individual cremation and have the ashes returned to you.

The clinic will make arrangements with the disposal service so that they can be coordinated for your convenience. Unfortunately, the disposal service is a private arrangement between the disposal service and the horse owner, this service will have to be paid before they are able to attend.

Conclusion

The death of the horse is not a subject that most people like to think about. However, it is important to consider what you will do and to plan ahead so that you will be able to cope with any eventuality. Please talk to any of our vets, nurses or reception staff if you require any further information. Our receptionists are sympathetic horse owners who will assist you by making all arrangements for euthanasia and co-ordinate the vets arrival with that of the disposal service.

