



## **American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) Euthanasia Guidelines**

In accordance with AVMA's position on euthanasia of animals, the AAEP concurs that euthanasia is an acceptable humane procedure once all available alternatives have been explored with the client. In certain cases, euthanasia should be regarded as a responsible treatment option. The AAEP supports euthanasia when that choice is best for the horse and in accordance with the role of the veterinarian as the animal's advocate.

The AAEP recommends that the following guidelines be considered in evaluating the need for humane euthanasia of a horse. The attending veterinarian is able to assist in making this determination, especially regarding the degree to which a horse is suffering. Guidelines are listed below to assist in making humane decisions regarding euthanasia of horses.

### **A horse should not have to endure the following:**

- Continuous or unmanageable pain from a condition that is chronic and incurable.
- A medical condition or surgical procedure that has a poor prognosis for a good quality of life.
- Continuous analgesic medication and/or box stall confinement for the relief of pain for the rest of its life.
- An unmanageable medical or behavioral condition that renders it a hazard to itself or its handlers.

### **The following euthanasia techniques are deemed acceptable by properly trained personnel:**

- Lethal dose of barbiturates (intravenous)
- **Gunshot to the brain** (prior sedation should be considered when possible)
- **Penetrating captive bolt to the brain using an extended bolt designed for euthanasia** (prior sedation should be considered when possible)
- **Lidocaine hydrochloride 2% intrathecal** with the horse in a surgical plane of general anesthesia
- **A concentrated solution of either potassium chloride (intravenous) or magnesium sulfate (intravenous)** with the horse in a surgical plane of general anesthesia
- Alternative methods may be necessary in special circumstances under the discretion of the veterinarian.

The choice of euthanasia technique should take into consideration local laws and regulations, the experience and training of the veterinarian and the final disposition of the horse. In some jurisdictions the use of pentobarbital may be discouraged due to the potential for environmental residues.

Prior to euthanasia, clear determination of the insurance status of the horse should be made as an insurance policy constitutes a contract between the horse owner(s) and the insurance carrier.

*Revised by AAEP board of directors in 2021.*