



# Euthanasia

**Advice for Rossdales LLP  
Ambulatory Clients**



We are sorry that you are facing the loss of your horse or pony. In these difficult circumstances we understand that the process of euthanasia, post-mortem examination and carcass disposal is a complex and sometimes emotive subject where clarity of communication and informed consent are of paramount importance. This leaflet aims to address some of these issues but you are always welcome to discuss any aspect of this with one of our veterinary surgeons.

The veterinary surgeon in charge of the animal requiring euthanasia will communicate clearly with you to come to an agreement that euthanasia is to be carried out.

You will be informed of the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of euthanasia so that you can make an appropriate choice. Any personal wishes regarding the process for euthanasia and carcass disposal should be talked through with your vet.

If it is agreed that euthanasia should be carried out, written consent will normally be required and you will be asked to sign the relevant forms. If the circumstances have dictated that you were only able to give verbal consent, we will make detailed notes in your horse's clinical history to record the circumstances and to confirm that you were appropriately informed, and that you gave your consent.

## Methods of Euthanasia

Two commonly used methods of euthanasia available to us:

1. Injection of drugs that induce depression of the central nervous system, the cardiovascular system and the respiratory system resulting in unconsciousness and cardiac arrest. The most commonly used product is Somulose following some sedation. This method can only be undertaken by a veterinary surgeon. The carcass cannot be used for human consumption, nor usually for animal consumption.
2. Gun or pistol shot. This method is quick and can be performed by a non-veterinary surgeon who is licensed to perform this task. The carcass may be suitable for use for animal consumption but cannot enter the human food chain.

Sedation can be used in most cases and this is something you can discuss with your veterinary surgeon. They can also discuss in detail the options available and answer any questions you may have.

We are able to collect some mane, tail or any shoes you may want as a keepsake in memory of your horse.



# Methods of Carcass Disposal

Another factor that must be considered is how the carcass will be disposed of.

1. Most areas will be serviced by a carcass collection service and your veterinary surgeon or local authority should be able to give you a list of providers of this service. In the UK, horses now come under the Carcass Disposal Scheme, details of which can be found on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fallen-stock>

These service providers will take the carcass away for cremation or render, although in some instances they may be licensed to use appropriate carcasses for pet food.

2. In England you are able to bury your horse or pony on your own land as long as it follows the local regulations, proximity to water supply and drainage. If you have any queries contact your local council.
3. In some areas the local hunt kennels will take away carcasses (in some instances they may even be licensed to euthanase horses by shooting). Your veterinary surgeon may be able to advise you as to whether there are any hunts in your area that offer this service.





## Cremation

If you would like your horse or pony cremated, the carcass is collected by prior arrangement and taken to an animal crematorium. There are different options if you would like the ashes returned to you.

**Mass cremation:** means the body will be cremated with other horses. In some cases you can have a token of the total ashes returned to you.

**Individual cremation:** means that your horse is cremated on its own and the ashes can be returned to you. This will cost more than mass cremation.

The disposal operators will usually invoice owners direct, and the exact costs are out of our control. The cost may be influenced by the time of day, the size of the animal and your location.

### **Local operators with whom we are familiar include:**

**Newmarket Carcass Disposal Scheme** – Call Rosssdales Practice on 01638 663150

**Suffolk Pet Crematorium** – 01284 819981

**Peaceful Pets** – 01485 528141



## Post Mortem

Post mortem examinations are performed on deceased animals to determine the probable cause(s) of death. Post mortems may also be performed on the basis of legal or disease investigation needs.

### **What are the benefits of a post mortem?**

A post mortem can be very beneficial for owners and veterinary surgeons. It can offer closure during a traumatic time by confirming a clinical diagnosis or the severity of disease, or by identifying the cause of sudden death. A post mortem may be a requirement of your insurance company and you should check this before euthanasia.

Performing a post mortem can provide information on probable cause(s) of death, which may be beneficial in the selection of appropriate treatment for other animals. In some cases post mortems can help understanding of disease processes, education of clinicians and to further veterinary knowledge through research.

If you would like more information on post mortems then please do not hesitate to contact your veterinary surgeon.

## Planning Ahead

Whilst we appreciate that this subject is not something owners want to think about, we urge everyone to make a plan for euthanasia so that there is no need to gather information and make decisions during a stressful and upsetting time. Talking things through with your vet now can take a lot of the stress out of the situation when it occurs.

### Useful resources:



**WorldHorseWelfare**

**01953 497238**

**[info@worldhorsewelfare.org](mailto:info@worldhorsewelfare.org)**

'Just in case: The Facts' - covers euthanasia as a whole.

'Owner's Plan' - a form to be filled out and kept by an owner and made available to others who care for the horse (useful for livery yards).



**02476 840517**

**[friendsattheend@bhs.org.uk](mailto:friendsattheend@bhs.org.uk)**

'Assessing quality of life for your horse' and 'Euthanasia' help determine the right time and euthanasia method for you and your horse.

'Friends at the End' is a BHS initiative that offers a service to owners where a member of the team will come and support them through their horse's euthanasia.



**0800 0966606**

**[pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk)**

The Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Service is a telephone helpline and email service that offers free and confidential support to bereaved owners.

Hospital & Diagnostic Centre

Cotton End Road  
Exning, Newmarket  
Suffolk  
CB8 7NN  
01638 577754  
hospital@rossdales.com

Newmarket Practice

Beaufort Cottage Stables  
High Street, Newmarket  
Suffolk  
CB8 8JS  
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