



The Liphook Equine Hospital

EUTHANASIA - MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

Euthanasia, regardless of the circumstances, is always a difficult subject to contemplate, but, if you are well informed in advance of the options available and costs involved, you will be better able to make the right decision for you and your horse, when this choice has to be faced.

Location

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

At home - This will involve the least disturbance to the horse as it will remain in familiar surroundings but it is not always a feasible option. If you decide to have the horse euthanased at home, and there is time to plan, make sure that access to the field or stable yard is suitable for the collection vehicle. Try to warn other people at the yard of what is happening and when.

At the Hospital - This obviously requires the horse to be transported. On arrival, you will be asked to sign a consent form to state your wishes regarding euthanasia and disposal, and then the horse will be taken to a quiet area and euthanased.

In either location, you can request to stay while the euthanasia is carried out or you can arrange for a friend / nurse (if at the hospital) to hold the horse. Many owners are not sure whether they should remain with their horse during euthanasia - it is a very distressing time - and this decision can only be made by the individual. Many owners find that the better option is staying with their horse until he has been sedated and is no longer aware before leaving the scene.

It is important to ensure that the welfare of the horse always comes first.

Selecting an appropriate method

There are two choices of methods of euthanasia.

Lethal Injection - The horse is injected intravenously with a lethal overdose of anaesthetic drugs. A sedative may be administered prior to the injection. The horse will lose consciousness and collapse slowly. If this method of euthanasia is used then the options for disposal are limited, as they will need to be either buried or cremated.

Shooting - This must be booked if required, as the vets are no longer permitted to carry a gun with them routinely. Sedation may be given before shooting. After death there will be some involuntary movements of the legs and bleeding from the head which you should be prepared for, and which is normal.

Both methods are quick and painless for the horse but invoke different levels of stress for the attendants.

Arrangements for disposal

There are two main methods of disposal.

The knackerman provides a collection service at a cost, which is increased for horses that have had any drugs administered.

If your horse has been given any drugs, which not only include lethal injection (if it was the chosen method) but also routine drugs such as painkillers, you will have to have the horse cremated. If in any doubt please consult your vet who will be able to advise you. Cremation is widely used but is quite expensive and there are various options.

If your horse is cremated you can choose to pay for an individual cremation and have the ashes returned to you in a cardboard box for burial or in a large wooden casket. It is important to think about what you will want to do with the ashes when they are returned to you, as many people who have paid for ashes to be returned, subsequently choose never to collect them.

Cost

Although unpleasant, it is important to consider the cost of euthanasia and disposal before the event. As at August 2003 the following prices are the likely charges for euthanasia and disposal.

Cost of Euthanasia

Shooting - Approx. £65.00 + sedative if used (between £20 - £30 depending on size)

Lethal Injection - Approx. £95.00 + sedative (as above)

Both of these are including V.A.T. and will also have a travel charge added if euthanasia is being carried out at home.

Cost of Disposal

These are the costs of Disposal or Cremation as currently charged by three local firms, Chambers, Hawkins and Watsons. See below for up to date guide to prices which may vary widely depending on the option chosen.

Conclusion

The death of your 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 your vet or the reception staff at the hospital if you require any further information. They will also be able to assist you by making all the necessary arrangements should euthanasia be required, coordinating the veterinary surgeon and the knackerman.

The options detailed above are the methods of euthanasia and disposal used by the practice. Alternatives include sending the horse to a slaughterhouse, overseas for human consumption or the use of a local hunt kennels.

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