



LIPHOOK

EQUINE HOSPITAL

Euthanasia

- Helping you make 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 of the likely costs involved, you will be better able to make the right decision for you and your horse, when this choice has to be faced.



Euthanasia

Location

Unless it is an emergency situation you can decide in advance 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 to us. 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.

Alternatives include sending the horse to a slaughterhouse overseas for human consumption or the use of a local hunt kennels. **It is important to ensure that the welfare of your horse always comes first.**

Selecting an appropriate method

There are two choices for the method of euthanasia.

Lethal Injection - The horse is injected intravenously with a lethal overdose of anaesthetic drugs, which may follow a sedative injection. This preparation contains two parts; the first to act is a general anaesthetic which causes the horse to lose consciousness. The second part of the drug causes the heart to stop. The horse is unconscious and unaware from the moment the anaesthetic takes effect, but it takes a few moments for the horse to fall to the ground and for the heart to stop – this is quite normal, and may be accompanied by some involuntary movements. If this method of euthanasia is used then the options for disposal are limited as they will have to be cremated.

Shooting – This is a service that we no longer offer due to clients rarely requesting this method and the implications of holding firearms on our premises. After death there will be some involuntary movements of the legs and bleeding from the head which you should be prepared for, which is normal.

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



Euthanasia

Arrangements for disposal

The laws are quite strict and suitable disposal is mandatory, unless you are in the fortunate position of owning your own land which is not part of a water course. To bury your horse at home you will need to obtain, in advance, the permission of DEFRA and your local authority.

To assist you at this stressful time, arrangements can be made by our reception staff, acting on your behalf, for your horse to be collected for disposal by a licensed operator. These operators will invoice you directly for this service and at current prices you may expect a bill in the order of £260-£300 for collection and disposal; the exact cost is outside our control but will depend on the time of day and your location. These operators may also offer extra services such as an individual cremation and also the return of ashes for scattering or in a casket. All such arrangements are between you and the operator.

The contact details of the licensed operator who usually attends to horses in our area are Watson & Sons Ltd, Bishops Waltham (01489 892521, www.jhwatsonandsons.co.uk).

Other licensed operators include:

- Hawkins, Cowfold – 01403 864361
- Chambers, Guildford – 01483 505524
- Dignity, Odiham – 01252 844572

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, co-ordinating the veterinary surgeon and disposal.

Further information about horse euthanasia can be found on the web sites of World Horse Welfare, the Blue Cross and the British Horse Society.



Euthanasia



Copyright Liphook Equine Hospital – May 2015



The Liphook Equine Hospital , Forest Mere, Liphook, Hampshire, GU30 7JG
Practice Office: 01428 723594 / Hospital Office: 01428 727200
Email: post@theleh.co.uk Website www.theleh.co.uk