



PREPARING FOR EUTHANASIA

Putting a horse to sleep (also known as euthanasia) is sadly something that many horse owners must face at some point when owning or caring for a horse, pony or donkey.



Professional



Caring

There are many reasons why a horse may have to be euthanised, including illness, an accident, change in owner's circumstances or because old age or a pre-existing condition has led to their quality of life deteriorating. It is important for horse owners to be aware that due to serious injury or illness, euthanasia may have to be opted for unexpectedly in horses of any age. Dealing with an emergency is difficult enough without having to make some very hard decisions quickly and under pressure. By being prepared and understanding the processes and options available, you are making appropriate plans and this will help to make a difficult decision a little easier.

WHEN TO PLAN FOR YOUR HORSES EUTHANASIA?

If you don't yet have a plan for your horse's euthanasia, we recommend taking some time to think about it as soon as you can. If your horse develops a long term illness you may have a bit more time to consider your options; but if your horse suddenly falls ill or is involved in an emergency situation, it's likely you won't have much time at all to think about the emotional and practical implications of your horse needing to be put to sleep.

You will need to consider:

- Where you would like your horse to be euthanised, and what the circumstances may allow
- How you would like your horse to be euthanised, and by whom
- Who to contact in an emergency
- Costs involved, including any insurance cover

It's important that all horse owners know the options available and the procedures involved, so that you can make a fully informed decision and act in the best interests of your horse.

IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL UPSET?

It's completely normal to feel upset. It'll be hard at first but take each day as it comes, try to treasure your memories and talk to family and friends about it.

The first thing is not to feel embarrassed about showing your emotions. It takes time to get over the loss of a loved one, and, although reactions differ, you may feel a mixture of things, such as sadness, loneliness, anger, guilt and doubt,

Though it's natural, try not to feel guilty or blame yourself – the decision for euthanasia is taken with your horse's best interests at heart to avoid them suffering.

Some people find themselves questioning whether they did the right thing. It is normal to feel some doubt, though this will ease in time.



ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUR HORSES COLLECTION

After your horse's passing, we or you can arrange for the collection of your horse's body. It's best to think about the costs, the methods of euthanasia and what's available in your area beforehand. If your horse was euthanised by injection or had been given other drugs, the options for collection are cremation (group or individual) or burial (subject to certain legal restrictions).

Cremation

A private cremation can be arranged so your horse's individual ashes can be returned to you or scattered in a memorial garden at a pet crematorium. A vet should be able to tell you where the local pet crematorium is located.

Horse owners will need to confirm in advance if they wish to have an individual cremation – this option may not be possible at short notice if the horse has been put down in an emergency

Communal cremation, where your horse is cremated alongside others, may be an option too and this is usually cheaper than individual cremation (communal cremation will be where no ashes are returned. It may be possible to receive communal ashes, but these won't only be your horse's ashes). Speak to the pet crematorium about all available options.

BHS FRIENDS AT THE END HELPLINE

If you feel that you might benefit from talking to someone through the Friends at the End scheme, the BHS Horse Care and Welfare Team are available to offer you advice and support with any questions or concerns you may have.

More than 80 volunteer 'BHS Friends', are trained to support horse owners and carers through the difficult process of saying goodbye, and are on hand to talk you through the options available. Depending on the circumstances, it doesn't always have to end in euthanasia, and if there are other choices that will positively improve the horse's quality of life, they will help to find them. We always encourage horse owners and carers to work closely with their vet to help with the decision-making process.

**You can call the BHS helpline on 02476 840517* or email
friendsattheend@bhs.org.uk**