



Raeleughhead  
Duns  
Berwickshire  
TD11 3NS

[www.equitait.com](http://www.equitait.com)

## AN OWNER'S GUIDE TO EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia is always a difficult time for owners and the thought of it is generally not taken lightly. It is a very personal thing with different people having very different views on the timing and decision making process and as well as the method used and what happens to the body afterwards.

You are the guardian of your horse and so this will be one of the most important decisions that you will make.

Ultimately many people will make the decision when they feel the horse no longer has a sufficient quality of life. Judging this can be very difficult and owners are very often the best placed people to assess the animal's quality of life, along with help from their veterinary surgeon.

Compared to some other companion animals once retired there is a greater financial burden on the owner on keeping horses. The want or need to euthanase on financial grounds for many is a valid reason but it should not be confused with euthanasia on welfare grounds. The thought that because a horse no longer performs a role for that person does not necessarily mean the horse will be not be happy. If you cannot afford to keep the number of horses you have be honest with yourself and the veterinary surgeon for the reasons for euthanasia.

If your horse is insured and you think you may be able to claim for the value of the horse after euthanasia please discuss this with your vet and insurance company prior to euthanasia. Strict guidelines must be met for this to be likely and many insurance companies will also require a post-mortem examination to be performed at the owner's expense.

### *Options for methods of euthanasia*

While there are other methods the two most commonly used methods of euthanasia are

1. Lethal Injection with an anaesthetic agent
2. Shot with a gun (preferably a free bullet – as opposed to a captive bolt)

People's preferences will be altered by their previous experiences but having performed both of each, we would recommend that on the whole lethal injection as a safer more controlled method of euthanasia that generally provides a more peaceful end for both the horse and the viewing owner.

Staying with the horse until the point of euthanasia again is a very personal decision. Some people prefer to be with the horse right to the end, some find the process to disturbing to watch but may wish to come and see the body after the event and in some cases this helps the owner in the grieving process.

Please feel free to discuss how you would like the process to go with your veterinary surgeon and they will do their best to accommodate you wishes.

Some vets prefer to sedate all horses prior to euthanasia whilst others prefer that this does not take place.

If horses are injected with a lethal agent often the vet will inject the horse and then take the lead rope from the handler before asking them to retire a safe distance from the horse.



Raeleughhead  
Duns  
Berwickshire  
TD11 3NS

[www.equitait.com](http://www.equitait.com)

Please be aware that even after the heart and brain have stopped functioning the horse will not uncommonly appear to take multiple gasps of breath. While this is normal it can be distressing for owners if they are not aware that it is part of the normal process.

Please also be aware that horse's eyes cannot be closed post mortem.

After euthanasia some owners prefer to take a memento such as a lock of hair or mane.

### *Disposing of the body:*

There are three main methods of disposal of a horse's body

1. Removal for cremation
2. Burial
3. Remove to the local hunt to contribute toward the feeding of the hounds

Again this is a very personal decision.

Legally horses should not be buried although in our experience prosecutions for people who have buried horses are very rare.

Horse's that have been injected with a lethal agent cannot 'go to the hounds' however many hunt kennels will still offer collection for cremation.

Many horses will go for communal cremation. However if you would like your horse's ashes back this can be arranged by many services at an additional cost. There are various options available in terms of the amount of ashes you wish to get back and the type of caskets available. Owners are well advised to contact the individual service providers for the options that suit them best.

Owners should be aware that there is no 'nice' way of loading a dead body onto a lorry and they are generally well advised not to watch this process.

Below we have identified some of the local businesses that offer removal and cremation of horses (in alphabetical order) Please consult the service provider with regards the cost of their services.

<b>Service provider</b>	<b>Contact details</b>
Eildon Equine Cremation,	Trevor Adams – 01835822553 / 07967 683841 St Boswells
Grayshill Knackery Ltd	Cumbernauld Glasgow Lanarkshire G68 9BA 01236 823138
SB and Co Carcass Removal	01835822289 Unit 12, Charlesfield, St. Boswells, Melrose, Roxburghshire, TD6 0HH
The Pet Crematorium	0191 373 551 (County Durham) 01698 888500 (Larkhall) Offer individual cremation with ashes returned



Raeleughhead  
Duns  
Berwickshire  
TD11 3NS

[www.equitait.com](http://www.equitait.com)

In terms of cremation services the uplift and cremation cost vary widely depending on a number of factors e.g. size and weight of the animal, method of euthanasia, whether you opt for a communal cremation or whether you want individual cremation with the ashes back. As a rough guide costs can vary from £100 - £300 plus VAT for uplift after lethal injection for communal cremation. Most of these service providers insist on payment at or prior to collection and therefore it is generally easier for client to liaise direct with them.

The approximate current cost for lethal injection is £156.94 (inc VAT) plus the visit fee.

We require a consent form to be filled in prior to euthanasia. Frequently the owner doesn't want to be present on the day or are too upset to be filling in forms. To aid the flow of the call on the day please ensure the attached consent form is signed and either emailed or posted back to the practice well before the date or handed to the veterinary surgeon prior to the event on the day of the call.

Likewise, after the event many owners do not want the emotional upset of receiving an invoice. For planned euthanasia we would be happy to give you an estimate for our services and take your bank card details and authorisation to take the estimated amount after the event should you find this easier.

After the death of a horse you are legally obliged to inform the relevant Passport Issuing Organisation (PIO) and return the passport to them within 30 days. Some of these organisations will return the passport to you afterwards if you request it as a keepsake.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact our office or one of the vets.