



Euthanasia

When is it time to say goodbye?

In some situations, such as a severely broken leg, or a sudden illness, the decision as to when to put your beloved horse or pony to sleep may be taken out of your hands. However, for older horses or those with chronic illnesses or injuries, often the decision is a very difficult one to make. If you are worried that your horse is struggling, we would recommend phoning for an initial chat as it may be that we can help improve your horse's quality of life; however it may be kindest in some cases to say goodbye.

What are my options?

- **Lethal Injection**

Both our vets put horses to sleep by injection. Your horse will be sedated first, as this makes them much calmer and very few horses will then 'fight' the euthanasia injection. The euthanasia injection acts as a general anaesthetic first, so that your horse will fall asleep and then pass away. Whilst this is happening they may have a twitch and a snort but they are unaware of it. The vet will try to guide your horse down to the ground gently but sometimes this is not possible, and they may fall suddenly – however, they will not feel any pain at this point as they will be asleep.



Bexfields Farm
Galleywood road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 8BY
01245 346904

admin@claredonequine.co.uk

- **Pistol**

Some people choose to have their horses put to sleep by being shot; in trained hands this is instant and for some horses (e.g. those that are very afraid of vets/needles) this may be a less stressful method. Most crematoriums and some hunts will be licensed to offer this service.

Practical points to consider

In an emergency it is often impossible to plan ahead, but for planned euthanasias there are a number of things you can consider beforehand to make the day less stressful for you and your horse.

- **Who is going to be present?**

Do the whole family wish to be there? Children? Friends? From a practical point of view it is often trickier if the whole family are there, in case the horse falls in a direction that we are not expecting, but we are more than happy for lots of people to be making a fuss of them until the point of injection. We would recommend you have a friend or relative to help you afterwards, as you are bound to be upset.

Equally, if you do not feel that you can stay for the euthanasia of your horse, and would rather remember them as they are, we can accommodate this. Often it is best if you stay until your horse is sedated, so they are nice and relaxed, and then after this point they will be fairly unaware if you wish to leave. All of our team are horse owners and we guarantee we will treat your horse with kindness and dignity for their last moments if you do not feel you can stay.

- **Where would you like it to be performed?**

It is nicest for your horse to be put to sleep in their usual surrounding, as this is often less stressful. We like them to have a soft landing, so a grassy field or an arena are good choices. From a practical point of view, if you are having them collected for cremation an area that is easy to access with a trailer is best, or if you will be burying your horse then near to where you plan on doing this will make things easier afterwards.

- **What would you like to happen to your horse afterwards?**

Most owners opt to have their horses cremated, either individually or as a communal/group cremation. If you choose to have your horse cremated individually then you will also have the option of having some or all of your horse's ashes back. You can arrange this via the crematorium in advance for planned euthanasia's, or we can help you with this.

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If you have your own land then it may be possible to bury your horse at home, however you should check with your local council prior to this, as there may be restrictions which will vary depending on your area.

- **Would you like any keepsakes of your horse?**

Many owners choose to have a plaited section of mane or tail as a keepsake of their horse, and then if they wish this can be turned into a memento – for example a bracelet. Some also wish to have their horse's shoes removed and keep these. Similarly, some owners would rather just have their photographs and memories of their horse; everyone is different.

Useful contacts

- Clarendon Equine office – 01245 346904
- Resting Horses crematorium – 01277 890009
- Rowe Green crematorium – 01376 331136
- Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support Service – 0800 096 6606 (8:30am-8:30pm)
- Carolyn Bryant Counselling Services – 01279 874915



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