

Heart of Phoenix Equine Rescue Policy Regarding Euthanasia

Based on the AAEP's recommendations, Heart of Phoenix (HOP) adheres to the following:

All situations will be judged on the individual merits and circumstances surrounding the particular horse.

Euthanasia decisions will be made by the director or president of the Heart of Phoenix with consideration given to the full quality of life picture presented by the attending veterinarian, always respecting and not ignoring the process shared in this policy.

Heart of Phoenix believes a horse should not have to endure conditions which negatively impact an animal's quality of life today or/and in the future, including ability to be kept safe, receive farrier and vet care, find an adoptable home and present no danger to themselves, other horses or to humans.

The rescue serves as an animal advocate; therefore, euthanasia is a suitable option for horses without excellent life quality and a safe future or for those who present a danger to handlers and care providers.

The following are considerations that consider when making end of life decisions on a horse in our care:

1. Will the horse require pain management in the form of oral medication and/or injections to be comfortable for the future?
2. Does the horse have compounding medical and/or behavioral issues?
3. Does the horse have one or more chronic condition(s) that will only deteriorate in the future making his current life the best he can attain?
4. Is there limited evidence the horse will have a mostly comfortable, stress free and pain free days ahead without long term medical management?
5. Has the horse been unable, within a reasonable timeframe with a qualified trainer, to meet important safety and husbandry benchmarks for handling and care, meaning the average equine handler, farrier and vet cannot consistently: catch, trim, vaccinate, deworm, load and unload in a trailer?
6. Has the horse shown consistently dangerous behaviors under saddle, such as repeatedly bolting, bucking, flipping over or rearing or shown consistently dangerous behaviors on the ground, such as biting, striking, bolting, kicking with intention?
7. Has the horse injured volunteers, leadership, care providers or trainers during routine handling or caregiving?
8. Has the horse failed to make measureable progress in vital care and handling areas from training session to training session?
9. Has the horse failed to adjust to a natural herd environment or failed to adapt to human handling without a noteworthy stress response?
10. Does the placement of the horse into a safe, long term home present safety or quality of life concerns?

If one or more of these IMPORTANT TEN questions receive the answer of "Yes," then euthanasia will be considered.

HOP acknowledges the AVMA's position on euthanasia of animals, which accepts that humane euthanasia of horses not able to find a safe, adoptable home, as an acceptable procedure once all available alternatives have been explored.

The following, in accordance with AVMA's and AAEP's guidelines, will be used, in part, to make a humane decisions regarding euthanasia of horses:

- A horse should not have to endure continuous or unmanageable pain from a condition that is chronic and incurable.
- A horse should not have to endure a medical or surgical condition that has a hopeless chance of survival.
- A horse should not have to remain alive if it has an unmanageable medical condition that renders it a hazard to itself or its handlers.
- A horse should not have to receive continuous analgesic medication for the relief of pain for the rest of its life.
- A horse should not have to endure a lifetime of continuous individual box stall confinement for prevention or relief of unmanageable pain or suffering.

In addition,

The Five Freedoms are internationally accepted standards of care that affirm every living being's right to humane treatment. These standards were developed by Britain's Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1965 and adapted by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians for companion animals in shelters.

The Five Freedoms ensure that we meet the mental and physical needs of animals in our care:

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor. This must be specific to the animal. For example, puppies, adult dogs, pregnant cats, and senior cats all need different types of food provided on different schedules.
- **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area. This means you should provide soft bedding and an area with appropriate temperature, noise levels, and access to natural light. If an animal is outside, it must have shelter from the elements as well as appropriate food and water bowls that will not freeze or tip over.
- **Freedom from pain, injury, or disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment. This includes vaccinating animals, monitoring

animals, physical health, treating any injuries and providing appropriate medications.

- **Freedom to express normal behavior** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal's own kind. Animals need to be able to interact with — or avoid — others of their own kind as desired. They must be able to stretch every part of their body (from nose to tail), and run, jump, and play. This can be particularly challenging when animals are housed in individual kennels.
- **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering. The mental health of an animal is just as important as its physical health — as psychological stress can quickly transition into physical illness. These conditions can be achieved by preventing overcrowding and providing sufficient enrichment and safe hiding spaces.

The American Veterinary Medical Association defines animal welfare as “how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, able to express innate behavior, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress” (AVMA, 2023).

The Five Domains for Equine Wellness are an important factor in euthanasia decisions. These can be summarized as:

1. Access to fresh water and an appropriate diet to maintain health and vigour
2. Adequate comfort and shelter, freedom from stress or fear
3. The prevention of vice, injury, parasitic infestation and disease
4. Freedom of movement and the opportunity to exercise normal patterns of behaviour
5. Can have normal behavioral Interactions with their own kind; Interactions with environment and with others

Heart of Phoenix complies and is in accordance with the

AVMA's and AAEP's Techniques for Euthanasia – The following techniques for performing euthanasia of horses by properly trained personnel are deemed acceptable:

1. Intravenous administration of an overdose of barbiturates
2. Gunshot to the brain (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00006594/00001>) Shearer JK, Nicoletti P. Humane euthanasia of sick, injured and/or debilitated livestock. University of Florida IFAS Extension)
3. Intravenous administration of a solution of concentrated potassium chloride (KCl) with the horse in a surgical plane of general anesthesia.
4. Alternative methods may be necessary in special circumstances.

BODY DISPOSAL:

Heart of Phoenix realizes that proper disposal of a carcasses is vital to minimize the further spread of pathogens, as well as to prevent contamination of the land and waterways from medical solutions used during euthanasia. We adhere to the guidelines shared by the United Horse Coalition, which can be read at this link: https://unitedhorsecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UHC_Disposal_Options_For_Equines_2019.pdf and typically, HOP utilizes an EPA Approved Landfill