



# College of Veterinary Medicine Policies and Procedures

Subject: Euthanasia and Euthanasia  
Species Chart

Section: Animal Care Services  
Number: CVM 55.6.3.02  
Pages: 5  
Date: October, 2014  
Replaces Policy Dated: 2012  
To Be Reviewed Yearly by: AHC Director  
Source:  
Cross Reference:

## EUTHANASIA AND EUTHANASIA SPECIES CHART

Animal Health Center clinicians have the responsibility to always recommend what is best for the pet, our patient. Under certain circumstances a clinician may decide the best choice is euthanasia. Never make this recommendation without considering and discussing all options with the pet owner.

If a pet is presented for euthanasia because of a behavioral problem, determine if the pet indeed has a behavioral problem or if the behavior in question is a medical problem. However, if no medical problem indeed exists and the behavior cannot be corrected, it is permitted to euthanize the pet without further qualifications.

### **Purpose**

To euthanize a pet family member is a very tough decision. Through our policy, we strive to assist families in this most difficult decision making process.

### **Euthanasia Procedure**

#### Authorization to Perform Euthanasia

Necessary paperwork must be completed before we can euthanize a pet. Complete the following:

1. Tell the client that there are a few things that need to be done before we can perform the euthanasia.
2. Have the client sign the Authorization to Perform Euthanasia form. Verbal or telephone permission requires a witness. Have the witness sign the form.
3. Ask the client what they would like to do with the remains:
  - a. take the remains today
  - b. take the remains later (set time and day)
  - c. cremation with no return of ashes
  - d. cremation with ashes given back to the client ( Tell the client the cost and estimate the time plus one week.)
4. Explain the cost of all the above options.
5. Suggest that they settle the account now, so they do not have to do it later.
6. To settle the account, have the client go to the discharge desk and complete the transaction.
7. Place the signed Authorization to Perform Euthanasia form in the patient's medical record.

## **Prepare the Family**

To euthanize a pet is a difficult decision for the family and the hardest part of our jobs. There is not a tougher part of life than losing someone you love. We need to be very sensitive to and compassionate with our clients in helping them understand what occurs when we euthanize their pets and also what happens with the pet's remains. We need to listen to our client's needs and take our explanation very seriously. There are three rules to follow:

- LISTEN! Some clients will want to know everything, and some would rather not know what happens at all. Listen to what they are asking you.
- Be HONEST in what happens to their pet immediately after euthanasia and how we take care of the pet's remains.
- Be COMPASSIONATE! How would you like to be treated if it were your pet?

Honesty is the best policy. Even when you are honest though, choose your words wisely. There are words that are both honest and compassionate. The following are some examples of how you might best tell the client what happens.

You can assist the family by doing the following things:

1. Ask them if they have young children. If they do, tell them that it is often best to bring in the children to discuss their pet's situation with you.
2. Explain the following to the adult family members:
  - a. It is often best for the children to see the pet after it is dead to help them understand what happened.
  - b. If possible, let the children help bury the pet's remains or ashes. The feelings of loss the children have are very real. They may be losing a peer and a playmate.
3. Discuss options with the adult family members alone and let them make the decision they think is right for their family.
4. Ask them if they want to be with their pet when the animal goes to sleep for the last time.

**If the client does not wish to be with the pet during euthanasia**, explain the following to them:

1. You will perform the euthanasia immediately by injecting an overdose of anesthetic intravenously.
2. Tell them the pet will feel a mild prick from the injection, then the pet gets very tired and goes to sleep. After that, the pet's heart stops. It will take only a few moments.
3. Tell them what will happen with the remains. (This is the triple check to make sure you have not misunderstood anything.)

Perform the euthanasia in the treatment area and then bring the pet to the client, be sure to:

1. Have all paperwork and finances completed prior to euthanizing the pet.
2. Have the team prepared to perform the euthanasia right away.
3. Place the deceased pet in a casket and help the client to the car.
4. Use the back hall behind the Administration Offices to remove the animal from the building.

**If the client does want to be present during the euthanasia**, explain the following:

1. You and the technician will first take the pet into the treatment room to put in an IV catheter (this will allow the client to be able to hold the pet if they wish).
2. Tell them you will need to shave a little hair on the leg in order to place the catheter in the vein. A rear leg may be beneficial so that the client can be petting the pet's head while the solution is being given.

3. Explain to the client that you, the technician, the pet and the pet's family will perform the euthanasia in an interview room. You can do it on the floor with them holding the pet or on the table, whatever is most appropriate.
4. Explain to the client that you will inject a huge overdose (give at least twice the recommended amount) of a very powerful anesthetic.
5. Explain that as soon as the anesthetic quickly circulates throughout the bloodstream, the pet is in a deep plane of anesthesia that soon leads to death.
6. Explain that on rare occasions the muscles may release energy for up to a couple of minutes longer. That means that "although your pet will already be gone, he may twitch, may gasp, may make noise or he may lose control of his bowels and bladder. These things happen rarely, but warning the client that this may occur is best.

**Just before performing the euthanasia, be sure to:**

Review the procedure with the technician that will be helping you BEFORE entering the exam room. Once you are in the exam room and the catheter is in place, make sure you have all the necessary supplies including lots of towels for padding, covering and cleaning up as well as extra euthanasia solution, Kleenex and a stethoscope.

Explain the following to the client:

1. what to expect
2. they have given the pet a great life and are doing the right thing
3. it is alright to talk to and love the pet
4. it is alright to cry
5. you will tell them when you start injecting the solution and what to expect
6. you will tell them when the pet is gone (Use stethoscope and palpebral reflex; not corneal reflex.)
7. that when the pet is gone, you will stay for a few minutes to answer any questions or help in any way, and that they can stay with the pet as long as they want.

If the pet's remains are going home with the family, explain that you will help them place their pet into the casket and into the car so they can take their pet home.

**Dos and Don'ts**

The following is a list of things to remember when dealing with the difficult decision to euthanize a pet.


- Do acknowledge how difficult the decision to euthanize must have been.
- Do express your grief by saying, "I know this was a difficult decision for you and your family". Use caution with phrases such as, "I'm sorry," as it implies guilt where none exists. Instead, acknowledge the ultimate care they gave to their pet.
- Do remember always to send a sympathy card that day signed by the entire team.
- Do ask the client if they are alright to drive. If they are not, call a cab or a family member.
- Do not let an emotionally upset client drive.

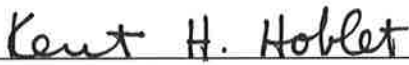
**Client-Requested Euthanasia**

We will not euthanize pets that are mentally and physically healthy. Instead, we may offer help to clients in finding a home for their pets through an adoption agency.

## EUTHANASIA SPECIES CHART – APPENDIX I

Species	Acceptable	Conditionally Acceptable
Amphibians	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics (in appropriate species), CO <sub>2</sub> , CO, tricaine methane sulfonate (TMS, MS 222), benzocaine hydrochloride, double pithing	Penetrating captive bolt, gunshot, stunning and decapitation, decapitation and pithing
Birds	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics, CO <sub>2</sub> , CO, gunshot (free-ranging only)	N <sub>2</sub> , Ar, cervical dislocation, decapitation, thoracic compression (small, tree-ranging only)
Cats	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics, CO <sub>2</sub> , CO, potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia	N <sub>2</sub> , Ar
Dogs	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics, CO <sub>2</sub> , CO, potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia	N <sub>2</sub> , Ar, penetrating captive bolt, electrocution
Fish	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics, CO <sub>2</sub> , tricaine methane sulfonate (TMS, MS 222), benzocaine hydrochloride, 2-phenoxyethanol	Decapitation and pithing, stunning and decapitation/pithing
Horses	Barbiturates, potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia, penetrating captive bolt	Chloral hydrate (IV, after sedation), gunshot, electrocution
Rabbits	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics, CO <sub>2</sub> , CO, potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia	N <sub>2</sub> , Ar, cervical dislocation <1 kg), decapitation, penetrating captive bolt
Reptiles	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics (in appropriate species), CO <sub>2</sub> (in appropriate species)	Penetrating captive bolt, gunshot, decapitation and pithing, stunning and decapitation
Rodents and other small mammals	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics, CO <sub>2</sub> , CO, potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia, microwave irradiation	Methoxyflurane, ether, N <sub>2</sub> , Ar, cervical dislocation (rats <200 g), decapitation
Ruminants	Barbiturates, potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia, penetrating captive bolt	Chloral hydrate (IV, after sedation), gunshot, electrocution
Swine	Barbiturates, CO <sub>2</sub> , potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia, penetrating captive bolt	Inhalant anesthetics, CO, chloral hydrate (IV, after sedation), gunshot, electrocution, blow to the head <3 weeks of age)
Zoo animals/wildlife	Barbiturates, inhalant anesthetics, CO <sub>2</sub> , CO, potassium chloride in conjunction with general anesthesia	CO <sub>2</sub> , N <sub>2</sub> , Ar, penetrating captive bolt, gunshot, kill traps

Approved:  9-24-14  
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