

Attachment 1: Guidance for Euthanasia

I. Euthanasia for Reasons Related to Acts of Mercy or Health and Safety

The Authorized Officer (AO) will authorize the euthanasia of a wild horse or burro when any of the following conditions exist:

- A. Sickness, failing health, or an infirmity, disease, injury, lameness, or serious physical condition or defect that has a poor prognosis for improvement or little chance of recovery. This would include conditions that are not treatable or for which treatment is impractical for a wild horse or burro in its present setting. This includes but is not limited to the following:
 - 1. Severe tooth loss or wear.
 - 2. Club foot, particularly those that are beyond vertical or affect more than one foot.
 - 3. Permanent blindness; particularly double eye blindness or single eye blindness that involves an injury or condition that would require treatment or single eye blindness to which the animal is not well adjusted.
 - 4. Cryptorchidism that is bilateral.
 - 5. Cryptorchidism that is unilateral and cannot be completely corrected with confidence by castration.
 - 6. Enlarged joints or deformed limbs such as from injury or severe arthritis.
 - 7. Other serious or severe acquired, developmental, or congenital abnormalities.
- B. A Henneke body condition score (Attachment 2) of less than three with a poor prognosis for improvement.
- C. Old age characterized by physical deterioration, the inability to fend for itself, suffering, or closeness to death.
- D. Direction from a state or federal animal health official ordering the humane destruction of the animal as a disease control measure.
- E. The animal exhibits dangerous characteristics beyond those inherently associated with the wild characteristics of wild horses and burros.
- F. The animal poses a public safety hazard (e.g., loose on a busy highway), has escaped from a facility or pasture or is otherwise roaming freely in an unauthorized area and an alternative remedy (capture, relocation, or return to a herd management area (HMA), pasture or facility) is not immediately available.

II. Authorized Delegations and Required Training

A. Authority to Authorize Euthanasia

Decisions regarding the euthanasia of a wild horse or burro rest solely with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) AO, defined in 43 CFR 4700.0-5 as "any employee of the Bureau of Land Management to whom has been delegated the authority to perform the duties described herein," or the Authorized Officer's Representative (AR) (persons designated by the AO as described in 43 CFR 4730.1). In some cases, the decision to euthanize an animal must be made in the field and cannot always be anticipated. To minimize suffering by providing euthanasia in a timely manner, managers should have a sufficient number of individuals trained to perform euthanasia that meet the state director's firearm standards, the requirements outlined in 43 CFR 4700, and in this Instruction Memorandum. When possible, a veterinarian should be consulted prior to euthanasia unless circumstances necessitating euthanasia are urgent or obvious (e.g., a broken leg or other severe injury) and a logistical delay in obtaining this consultation would only prolong an animal's suffering.

B. Authorization to Perform Euthanasia

Authorized Officers may delegate the authority to perform euthanasia in writing to anyone known to the AO to have completed required training, skill, experience, and equipment to perform euthanasia described in this policy (See Guidance for Euthanasia Related to Acts of Mercy, Health, Safety Section D.). Individuals to whom the AO may consider delegating this authority include BLM employees, veterinarians, individuals under contract with the BLM, individuals performing duties under assistance agreements with the BLM, federal, or state wildlife management officers, animal control officers, and law enforcement officers.

On gathers, at preparation facilities (facilities where animals are prepared for transport or adoption), at off-range corrals (ORC) or off-range pastures (ORP) facilities, and at inmate training facilities, the AO is responsible for ensuring trained personnel are available to perform euthanasia at appropriate times. This includes anytime when wild horses or burros are being captured, sorted, worked, or loaded for transportation, regardless of location. At adoptions and public events, the AO will ensure that a veterinarian is on-site or on-call to perform timely and discreet euthanasia if necessary, as an act of mercy.

C. Training Requirements

Only persons trained by a veterinarian on how to perform euthanasia will be authorized to perform euthanasia. All personnel authorized to perform euthanasia will be trained to use gunshot. Only those specifically trained on the techniques for injection or captive bolt are authorized to use these techniques. Any veterinarian known to the AO to have the necessary knowledge and experience with the methods described herein may provide this training. This training will not require recertification on an annual basis; however, the Washington Office (WO) may direct individuals to take refresher training if there are significant changes in the acceptable practices.

When a firearm (includes captive bolt guns) is used to perform euthanasia by a non-BLM employee, that individual must also have formal training or certification in firearms safety. Appropriate certification for non-BLM personnel would include a hunter or firearms safety qualification recognized as satisfying a state-mandated hunter safety requirement or a firearms safety class certified by the National Rifle Association, law enforcement, or military program.

BLM employees performing euthanasia with a free-bullet or captive bolt gun must be authorized to use a firearm by the state director and meet all requirements specified in the state office firearms policy. If a state has not issued a firearms policy addressing Wild Horses and Burros (WHB) euthanasia, the BLM employees performing euthanasia must complete annual training for certification in firearms safety and shooting proficiency in accordance with current BLM policy (see attachment 3).

III. Euthanasia Related to Specific WHB Management Activities

A. Euthanasia On-The-Range

This section sets euthanasia policy for the BLM in field situations associated with on-the-range WHB management, including lands other than those administered by the BLM where WHBs are present.

The BLM WHB specialist responsible for management of an HMA will evaluate the condition of wild horses and burros throughout the year during routine resource monitoring efforts. If an animal is suffering from any of the conditions listed in A through F [above](#), the animal should be euthanized, if possible, on the range as an act of mercy. If euthanasia is not possible, humane killing as described in Section F below may be performed as an act of mercy. On the range, the euthanasia may be performed by any BLM employee or other qualified individual that has been delegated that authority by the AO, successfully completed the required training in euthanasia and firearms safety as described [above](#) and has the appropriate equipment available.

B. Euthanasia During Gather Operations

During gather operations, the Contracting Officers Representative (COR), as delegated by the AO prior to the gather, will authorize the release or euthanasia of any wild horse or burro that they believe will not tolerate the handling stress associated with transportation, adoption/sales preparation, or holding. No wild horse or burro should be released or shipped to a preparation or other facility with a preexisting condition that requires immediate euthanasia as an act of mercy. The COR or Project Inspector (PI) should, as an act of mercy and after consultation with a veterinarian if present, euthanize any animal that meets any of the conditions described in A through F [above](#).

C. Euthanasia at Off-Range Corrals, including Inmate Training Facilities

If euthanasia is necessary at an ORC facility it will be performed by a trained and qualified individual as authorized by the AO. The BLM employees and contractors follow comprehensive animal welfare program standards to protect the health and welfare of wild horses and burros under their care. However, acute or chronic problems can develop during the captivity and handling of wild animals that must be humanely addressed by euthanasia. Some conditions may not immediately be apparent during gathers or other points of origin, require additional assessment or evaluation over time, or may best be addressed after an animal is moved to an ORC or preparation facility. Euthanasia at all ORC and preparation facilities will be applied as follows:

1. If an animal is affected by any of the conditions described in A through F [above](#) that causes acute pain or suffering and immediate euthanasia would be an act of mercy, the AO must ensure the animal is immediately euthanized.
2. If an animal is affected by any of the conditions described in A through F [above](#), but is not in acute pain, the AO should first consult a veterinarian. For example, if the animal has a physical defect or deformity that would adversely affect its quality of life, if placed in the adoption program or in ORP facilities, but acute suffering is not apparent, a veterinarian should be consulted prior to euthanasia. If the consultation confirms the animal meets a condition described in A through F [above](#), the animal will be euthanized in a timely manner.
3. If the AO or AR concludes, after consultation with a veterinarian, that an animal in an ORC facility is affected by any of the conditions described in A through F [above](#) or cannot tolerate the stress of transportation to another facility or adoption preparation, then the animal will be euthanized.

D. Euthanasia at Off-Range Pasture and Public Off-Range Pasture Facilities

The goal at ORP and PORP facilities is to maintain healthy animals in good body condition at all times. When animals are affected by chronic conditions such as failing health, cancer, limb deformities, arthritis or other causes of illness or persistent lameness and before they show signs of suffering or a loss of overall body condition, euthanasia must be considered as an act of mercy.

Periodically throughout the year, the BLM COR, Project Inspector (PI), Program Officer (PO), or Technical Advisor (TA) responsible for oversight will evaluate all horses and burros and establish their body condition, particularly if the facility is experiencing drought or some other event, which might limit forage availability. During the year, if any animal is affected by any of the conditions listed in A through F [above](#); the authorized personnel will euthanize that animal as soon as possible or within one week of consultation with the COR, PO, PI or TA.

A team will formally evaluate the condition of each animal on the ORPs at least annually. The evaluation team will consist of a BLM WHB personnel designated by the COR/PO and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) or other veterinarian acceptable to the COR or PO.

The action plan for formal evaluation includes annual inspections of all animals to evaluate their apparent health, overall condition and body condition. These inspections may identify animals that must be euthanized as an act of mercy to prevent slow and painful deaths. Visual inspections and the Henneke body condition (BC) scoring system are the prescribed methods used for the evaluation. All evaluations should be conducted prior to severe winter weather to identify horses with body condition scores of three or less before the onset of bad weather.

The PI or designated person, such as the contractor, will euthanize animals in the field within 72 hours of the evaluation. Animals with a body condition score of one or two that appear to be acutely suffering or have a poor prognosis for improvement should be euthanized sooner, if possible. Animals with a body condition score of three, or less that do not appear to be acutely suffering or have a fair or better prognosis for improvement will be rechecked in 30 days. Those that remain below BC 3 will be euthanized within 72 hours of the second evaluation. Arrangements for carcass disposal for euthanized animals will be in accordance with applicable state and county laws and ordinances.

Only the COR or PO can authorize the destruction of an animal from an ORP when that animal poses a public safety hazard or has escaped or is otherwise roaming freely in an unauthorized area when alternative remedies to capture or relocate the animal(s) have failed.

E. Euthanasia during Transportation

Problems can develop during transport of the animal(s), such as, new injuries that may occur or the exacerbation of existing conditions. If emergency euthanasia is necessary during transportation for any of the conditions described in A through F [above](#), the truck driver must immediately contact the AO, the COR, or other identified BLM representative. Under these circumstances, a veterinarian should be contacted immediately to evaluate the animal and perform euthanasia if indicated as soon as possible. If necessary, the animal(s) may need to be off-loaded at the closest BLM or suitable livestock handling facility to ensure that euthanasia can be performed safely and effectively.

F. Euthanasia at Adoptions or Public Events

The AO will ensure that a veterinarian is on-site or on-call and available to respond within two hours at any adoption or public event. If a veterinarian is unable to respond within that timeframe, the animal should be loaded on to a trailer and taken to the closest qualified veterinarian. The AO will consult with the veterinarian prior to making the decision to euthanize an animal; the veterinarian will perform the euthanasia in a timely and discreet manner. In the event that no qualified veterinarian is available within 2 hours, either on and/or off-site, and the need for euthanasia is obvious, the AO may load and transport the animal to a safe and discreet location and humanely euthanize it in order to prevent further

pain and suffering.

IV. Euthanasia of a Large Number of Animals

Euthanasia of a large number of animals for reasons related to acts of mercy, injury, disease or safety, should be identified and outlined in advance whenever possible. When field monitoring and pre-gather planning identify an increased likelihood that large numbers of animals may need to be euthanized during a gather, this should be addressed in the gather plan. In an on-range preparation, ORC or ORP facility situation, where a gather is not involved, advance planning should also be completed by the AO whenever possible. Arrangements should be made for a USDA APHIS or other veterinarian experienced with WHB to visit the site and consult with the AO on euthanasia decisions. This consultation must be based on an examination of the animals by the veterinarian. It should include a detailed written evaluation of the conditions, circumstances or history of the situation and the number of animals involved. Where appropriate, this information should be specific for each animal affected. During this planning stage, it is critical that the AO include the WHB state lead, appropriate state office, district office, and field office managers, and any contractors that may be involved.

V. Euthanasia of Animals Unusually Dangerous, Escaped, or Pose a Public Safety Hazard

Unusually aggressive wild horses and burros can pose an unacceptable risk of injury to personnel when maintained in enclosed spaces where some level of handling is required. In rare cases, animals on the range can also be dangerous to domestic animals and/or people. When a horse or burro is unusually dangerous, it is reasonable to conclude that an average adopter could not humanely care for the animal as required by the regulations (e.g., provide proper transportation, feeding, medical care and handling, 43 CFR 4750.1). The BLM cannot solve the problem by removing unusually dangerous animals from the adoption system and placing them in an ORP facility because this resolution poses significant risk of injury to animals in transport, the BLM personnel, and ORP operators. Similarly, animals that escape from facilities or pastures or are in unauthorized areas and cannot be relocated or captured can pose a public safety hazard on highways or by their interactions with people or domestic animals.

When deciding to euthanize an animal because it is unusually dangerous, the AO, in consultation with a veterinarian or other individuals with expertise in animal care, handling and behavior (as designated by the AO), must determine that the animal poses a significant and unusual danger to people or other animals beyond that normally associated with wild horses and burros. When unable to capture an animal to protect the public the AO must consult with another individual with expertise in animal capture and handling. The AO must determine that all reasonable efforts to relocate or capture the animal(s) have been tried and failed. The AO must document all aspects of the animal's behavior that make it unusually dangerous and/or describe the efforts made to relocate or capture the animal. All documentation must be included in a report, maintained in the appropriate WHB program file, and recorded in the Wild Horse and Burro Program System (WHBPS).

VI. How to Perform Euthanasia

When necessary, euthanasia will be performed in a dignified and discreet manner that is recognized and approved by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in their Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition. Three methods are authorized for use, as follows:

1. *Injection of a lethal dose of a barbiturate or barbiturate derivative such as sodium pentobarbital solution.*

Only commercially available pentobarbital products will be used for injectable euthanasia of conscious animals. Products will be administered by a veterinarian or technician working under the supervision of a veterinarian as dictated by state or federal regulations. A veterinarian supervising personnel using the euthanasia by injection technique is responsible for training that individual(s) as well as compliance with all applicable state and/or federal regulations regarding the acquisition, storage and disposition of euthanasia products. Consideration must be given for timely and appropriate carcass disposal when animals are euthanized by injection of pentobarbital products. When injectable agents are used, the veterinarian supervising the euthanasia process is responsible for ensuring carcasses are properly disposed of so tissue residues do not threaten wildlife species that may be attracted to and consume blood or carrion from euthanized animals.

2. *Gunshot to the brain of an animal that is calm and still, or humanely restrained.*

A properly placed gunshot to the brain of an animal that is calm and still, or humanely restrained, instantly produces an unconscious state followed quickly by a painless and humane death. This method of euthanizing wild horses and burros requires only minimal handling and restraint; and when performed on the range, drug residues that may poison wildlife are not a concern. Only qualified and experienced persons skilled in the safe handling and use of firearms and trained by a veterinarian will perform the procedure. The optimal placement of a gunshot is from the front of the animal, perpendicular to the skull at a point one inch above the intersection of two imaginary lines drawn like an “X” from the eyes to the base of the ears. Typically, when euthanizing a wild horse or burro in this manner with a handgun, the animal will be approached to within five-to-six feet and the gun will be held within a few inches or up to two-to- three feet from the animal.

The preferred firearm for routine use will be a 22-magnum caliber revolver. A 22 long rifle caliber handgun may also be used as well as other types and calibers of firearms including those typical for law enforcement or self-defense use (9mm, .38, .357, .40, or .45 calibers), if the operator is experienced with the firearm. Carbine rifles in lieu of a handgun in these same calibers can also be effective when used at similar or moderately increased (twenty to thirty feet) distances from those described [above](#) for handguns. The 22 magnum is highly effective, easily controlled and offers a lower risk of ricochet or having the bullet exit the carcass. Only hollow point or other controlled expansion types of bullets should be used to maximize tissue destruction while minimizing the risk

of ricochet or having the bullet exit the carcass. The easiest and safest way to euthanize a wild horse or burro is with the animal standing calmly on a trailer or confined in a small pen, portion of an alleyway or chute and the operator is positioned above the animal with visual and physical access to the animal. Animals that may be agitated, fractious or will not stand calmly may need to be placed in a chute or tied down for restraint; and this may be preferable for safety and reliability. Euthanasia should not be attempted when restraint is not adequate or the animal is not standing quietly. Animals moving freely in a large open pen are generally not adequately restrained and euthanasia should not be attempted in this circumstance.

3. *Penetrating captive bolt shot to the brain of an animal that is humanely and adequately and restrained.*

When properly applied by trained and experienced personnel, the application of a penetrating captive bolt gun to a calm, well-restrained horse or burro can be a humane and an effective means of euthanasia. Penetrating captive bolts use compressed air or a gunpowder blank to rapidly drive a metal rod through the skull into the brain. This impact, similar to a gunshot, immediately renders the animal unconscious so the animal is no longer aware of its surroundings and does not feel pain.

Unless recumbent and unable to move, animals must be restrained to minimize head movement. This restraint is typically achieved by use of a padded hydraulic squeeze chute or with a halter in a manual squeeze chute. Chemical immobilization and/or anesthesia may be used for restraint prior to application of the captive bolt as long as the captive bolt is applied immediately after the animal is adequately and safely restrained. Captive bolts are applied to the same target area described [above](#) for euthanasia by gunshot. Only the more powerful captive bolt guns with a longer bolt or specifically designed for euthanasia will be used.

Only persons authorized by BLM and specifically trained by a veterinarian in the use of a captive bolt will use this technique. The procedure will only be applied under the supervision of a veterinarian. The supervising veterinarian is not required to be on site every time a captive bolt is applied, but this supervision will include monitoring by the veterinarian to ensure euthanasia is performed humanely. Captive bolt equipment will be cleaned and maintained according to manufacturer guidelines. A record of maintenance will be kept on site with the equipment and reviewed by the supervising veterinarian on a regular basis.

Following euthanasia, death must be verified prior to moving the carcass for disposal. Properly shot or stunned animals should immediately collapse with no effort to then stand or roll into a sternal position. A blank stare straight ahead with complete dilation of the pupils, no movement of the eyes and the absence of a corneal reflex are the best indicators that death has occurred. The animal should also be examined for cessation of vital signs including pulse and rhythmic breathing. Unconscious animals should be handled and moved as little as possible until death is confirmed. Carcass disposal should be in accordance with state and local requirements, where applicable.

As recognized by the AVMA, circumstances exist with free-roaming wild animals where capture and chemical or physical restraint may not be practical prior to euthanasia. These situations may only serve to prolong or exacerbate the distress of an injured or suffering animal. Under these conditions and when an animal cannot be approached within a few feet, humane killing may be necessary to end the animal's suffering as quickly and humanely as possible. In these instances, methods typically used when hunting big-game animals of North America (e.g., elk, moose) in an ethical and responsible manner will be employed. It is not appropriate in these instances to use smaller caliber (e.g., 5.56 mm) rifles or other weapons targeted at the brain from longer distances. High-powered rifles targeted at the heart/lung and shoulder areas of an animal standing still and at typical hunting distances will be used in this circumstance.

For familiarity among operators, the recommended firearm is a bolt-action scoped rifle in a 30-06 caliber. Other firearm types and calibers with similar killing power typical for hunting large North American big-game animals (7mm magnum, .270, .308, .338 Win Mag, etc.) may be used if they are familiar to the operator. However, a .30-06 bolt-action scoped rifle sighted in for 200 yards offers a predictable and ethical means of quickly killing a large animal in the most humane manner possible under these circumstances. Only hollow point or other controlled expansion types of bullets should be used to maximize tissue destruction and minimize the risk of ricochet. It is not appropriate to substitute the use of a high-powered rifle from a distance for euthanasia using a gunshot to the brain when an animal can be restrained or in situations, such as, gathers, or temporary or ORC facilities when restraint and use of a more conventional euthanasia technique can be applied.

As noted by the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia, the psychological response experienced by people when observing euthanasia or death in any form is an emotional one dependent on the situation and the background of the observer. Grief and distress over the loss of life are the most common reactions. Expert technique and maintaining a calm and professional atmosphere during the procedure can help minimize these reactions in the persons who must perform the procedures as well as co-workers or bystanders. For safety as well as discretion, only mission-critical persons should be nearby when euthanasia is performed. The BLM employees and contractors involved in or observing the process should behave in a dignified and discreet manner that avoids public spectacle. While these considerations should not outweigh the primary responsibility of using the most rapid and painless euthanasia method possible under the circumstances, animals should be euthanized, and carcasses moved away from public view whenever possible; animals may need to be moved off-site prior to euthanasia. In some circumstances, the use of tarps or vehicles as a visual screen may also be appropriate.

As noted by the AVMA, circumstances may arise that are not clearly covered by any policy or set of guidelines for euthanasia. Whenever such situations arise, a veterinarian experienced with wild horses and burros should be consulted for their professional judgment of acceptable techniques for euthanasia. The animal's species-specific physiologic and behavioral characteristics, size, approachability and degree of suffering will be taken into consideration. In all situations, a method of euthanasia that minimizes suffering and distress of the animal will be chosen.

A. Documentation and Reporting of Euthanized Animals

A record of an animal's death by euthanasia on the range, during a gather, during transport, at facilities or during an adoption event, will be maintained by the BLM within WHBPS. The death record will identify the animal by using a description and/or freeze mark if the animal is marked, the date of the death, where the animal died and the reason(s) that euthanasia was performed. If the euthanasia was performed in the field or during a gather operation, then it is recommended that a copy of the death record also be maintained in the appropriate HMA case file.

When euthanasia is performed at a gather, the lead COR or Incident Commander (IC), in addition to the process detailed [above](#), will report the actions taken during gather operations in the comment section of the Daily Gather Overview, and in the Final Gather Data Report. Describing these mortalities in the gather records using the terms and definitions used in WHBPS for recording the Cause and Manner of Death along with Comments as appropriate will facilitate consistent reporting.

B. Planning and Communication

The WHB specialist or the BLM employee responsible for an HMA, gather, facility or public event is responsible for having a euthanasia plan of action in place at all times where there are federally protected wild horses and burros. The plan will address practical considerations such as (1) who will have designated authority to make decisions regarding euthanasia; (2) who will perform the procedure; (3) what method(s) of euthanasia will be used; and (4) how carcass disposal will be addressed.

When euthanasia is recommended for a large number of animals, a communications plan for internal and external contacts (including early alerts to state and Headquarters offices) should be developed in advance, if possible, and implemented concurrently while addressing the situation at-hand. The communications plan should address the need for the action, as well as the appropriate messages to the public and the media, including why animals are being euthanized and how the action is consistent with the BLM's responsibilities and policy.

All operation plans for gathers, adoptions and public events where it is possible that animals may need to be euthanized will include contingency plans that address the capability for performing the function. Each state will develop and implement a training and certification plan for those employees that will be tasked with euthanizing animals. A veterinarian will be present or on-call for all gathers, adoptions, and public events.