



Federation of European Equine
Veterinary Associations



Federation
of Veterinarians
of Europe

FVE/FEEVA position on End of Life for Horses *'Every horse deserves a quality life and death'*

DRAFT FOR MEMBER CONSULTATION
(deadline 30 November 2018- comments to info@fve.org)

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Introduction

The veterinary profession believes that horses, being sentient beings, deserve to be cared for in a responsible way from birth to death.

Horses has been bred for hundreds of years for the purpose of assisting mankind in various kinds of tasks in agriculture, transport and food production as well as their past use in warfare.

Parallel to these basic uses, they started to be used for pleasure, sport and social interaction and with industrialisation these purposes have grown to be the most predominant.

Horses being domesticated animals are very much dependent on their owners with regards to coverage of their basic needs such as feed and water, foraging, social interaction, hoof care, exercise, along with protection from neglect, pain, suffering, anxiety, injuries and permanent disability. Horse ownership brings with it the responsibility to provide for these basic needs of horses that will invariably involve substantial and sometimes unexpected expense.

Although horses can live easily 30 years, they generally retire much earlier; racehorses around 10 years or less, sport horses around 18 years or less and leisure and working horses around 20 years. Provision needs to be made on what to do with horses after retirement to make sure they do not become unwanted horses. Of the approximately 7 million horses in the EU, approximately 50% are signed out of the food chain, which means they are not allowed to go for slaughter. Options after their retirement is either that they are being kept and cared for until their death or euthanasia.

In society, during recent decades, a dynamic change in the perception of euthanasia of animals, including horses, has been developing. An ethical clash has emerged between the traditional utilitarian perspective and the animal rights movement perspective on whether euthanasia of horses is perceived as acceptable and under which circumstances.

This is a situation that calls for an **updated professional veterinary argument for when and why euthanasia should be seen as an obligation, securing the right to euthanize being crucial to horse welfare.**

35 **FVE/FEEVA Position**

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37 To avoid the problem with unwanted horses now and in the future, **FVE/FEEVA recommends:**

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- 39 • responsible breeding and ownership from birth to death,
- 40 • appropriate identification and registration of every horse,
- 41 • establishing measures to promote best practice in horse husbandry and management
42 include the education of current and future horse owners regarding the responsibilities of
43 horse ownership and liaison with the wider horse community and industry,
- 44 • to ensure that no horse ends up in a position where its welfare is compromised, the option
45 of euthanasia, based on veterinary advice and performed by a veterinarian, should be
46 secured,
- 47 • practical, affordable and dignified rendering services to be available,
- 48 • policy makers to examine whether the irreversible exclusion of the food chain is not
49 enhancing the problem and causing an unsustainable situation, without benefiting public
health.

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