



**WorldHorseWelfare**

# **End of life and euthanasia**

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# Overview



1. Introduction
2. Responsible ownership
3. Spectrum of options
4. Factors to consider
5. Barriers to euthanasia
6. When it goes wrong
7. Take home messages

# 1. Introduction

## What is World Horse Welfare?

- Leading charity for 90 years
- Covers full spectrum of horse world
- Works across 5 continents
- Approach based on experience and evidence

Helps through education,  
campaigns and  
hands-on care

Supports  
responsible use of  
horses in sport



# Advisor to sport regulators

- British Horseracing Authority (BHA)
- The FEI  
and so National Federations
- Member of the  
British Equestrian Federation and the  
European Horse Network



# Supporting horse racing



- Member of the BHA's welfare sub-committee
- Seek to provide a constructive voice
- Involved in 2011 review of the whip and Grand National

# Working with the FEI

- Advising the FEI for more than 30 years
- Welfare Code of Conduct – drafted with World Horse Welfare



*“All those involved in international equestrian sport must adhere to the FEI Code of Conduct ... and acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount ... and never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.”*

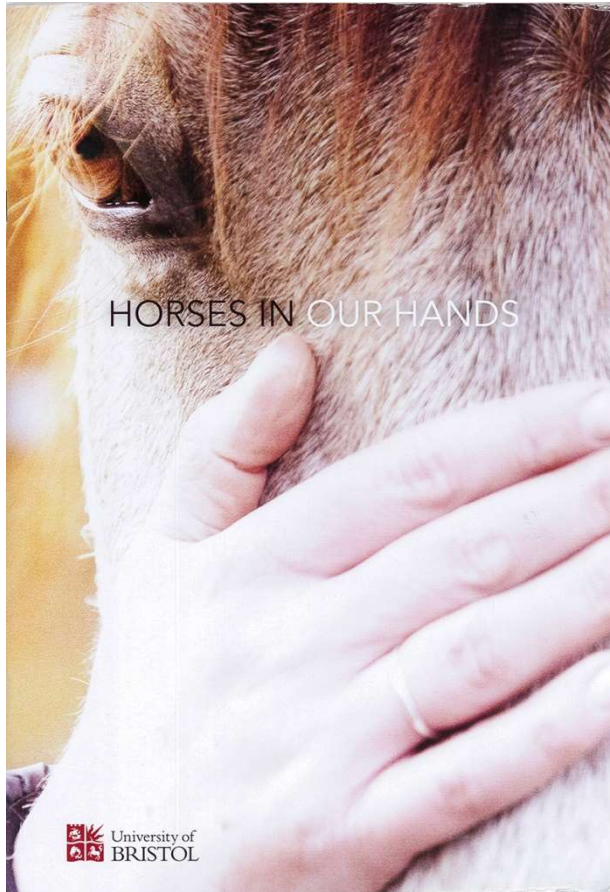
## 2. Responsible ownership

- From birth to death
- Responsible breeding
- Responsible care
- Good, timely end of life

**‘Unwanted’ horses pose significant welfare problems**







*“Delayed death is one of four priority welfare concerns in UK.”*

*- Horses in our Hands, University of Bristol 2016, research funded by World Horse Welfare*



### 3. Spectrum of options



Never euthanase (euthanize)

Euthanase all



- + More ethical?
- + Focus on 2<sup>nd</sup> careers
- Loss of \$£€ value
- May spiral into neglect
- Ultimately negative PR

- + Taking responsibility?
- + Confidence none fall into neglect
- Negative PR
- 'Easy' option
- Ethically unacceptable

# Slaughter



- Humane horse slaughter an outlet for 'unwanted' horses
- Slaughter close to source – transport can cause immense suffering
- Barriers to slaughter



## 4. Factors to consider

- Can I guarantee a good home for the horse?
- Are they suitable for a 2<sup>nd</sup> career/role?
- What is/will be their quality of life?



# Quality of life questions

- Are they in pain?
- Will they thrive away from racing?
- Do they still enjoy doing what they used to?
- Just in Case



# Quality not quantity



*Together, we need to be a strong voice to state unequivocally that an animal's quality of life has to be THE primary driver for making decisions around euthanasia.*



## 5. Barriers to euthanasia

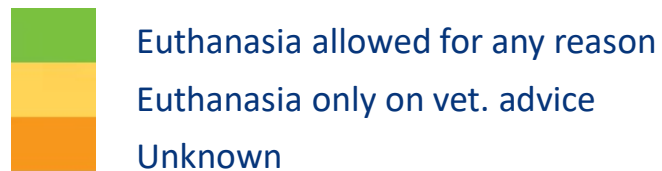


- Availability
- Costs
- Religious or cultural beliefs
- Attitudes





# Availability of euthanasia



# Drugs and Costs



- Drugs may not be not available in many countries
- Vet fees, carcass disposal can cost more than horse is worth financially
- In Europe, less availability of low-cost options



# Religious or cultural beliefs



- Euthanasia uncommon in Animistic or pacifist cultures
- Africa, Nepal, India – horses left to roam until eaten by predators
- Where no predators, this option is cruel as horse dies slowly



# Attitudes



- Reluctance to address poor health or make decision
- Peer pressure, PR
- Easier to ignore, or pass problem onto new owner

## 6. When it goes wrong





...it can be uncomfortably close to home



But so often it can and does go right...



# Take home messages



- Humane slaughter play a key role
- Euthanasia should never be seen as the easy option
- Quality of life is the crucial consideration
- We have to challenge
  - National Laws
  - Attitudes
  - Cultural and religious beliefs
- And above all be responsible owners – and be seen to be doing just that



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# Thank you for listening

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[worldhorsewelfare.org](http://worldhorsewelfare.org)

