



# Technical Guidelines for Euthanasia Methods

## Important Safety Guidelines

- Be aware that if euthanizing a standing horse by gunshot, the horse may lunge forward or rear up when shot.
- **If euthanizing a horse by gunshot, the bullet may ricochet or pass through the horse. Therefore, it is very important to ensure no person or other animal is within range.**

## Guidelines for Euthanizing a Horse by Free Bullet

- **It is imperative to use a sufficiently powered firearm.** For horses heavier than 180kg (400lb) select a gun that provides a minimum of 1,000 ft lbs of muzzle energy. This information can be found on the box of the ammunition used with your firearm. Most handguns are NOT sufficient. A .22 calibre gun may not be a sufficiently powered firearm for horses. Appropriate options for horses include the 20, 16 and 12 gauge shotgun. Slugs are the best choice, No. 4, 5, or 6 birdshot is ONLY acceptable for close-range. Woods et al. (2010), listed in the References, provides further details.

## Guidelines for Euthanizing a Horse by Penetrating Captive Bolt Gun

- **It is imperative to use a penetrating captive bolt gun that is designed to euthanize horses and is the correct caliber.** Some models are NOT designed to euthanize a horse - they merely stun the horse and a secondary step is required. There are captive bolt guns on the market now designed specifically for euthanasia on farm. A .25 calibre with an extended bolt is the most effective captive bolt gun for single-step euthanasia. If a less powerful captive bolt gun is used, there is a risk that the horse may only be temporarily stunned and a secondary method will be required. Woods et al. (2010), listed in the References, provides further details.
- Proper maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions is also essential.

## Secondary Steps

- Acceptable secondary steps include: a second shot by free bullet or penetrating captive bolt and a second injection (administered by a veterinarian). Cardiac puncture, bleeding, and pithing (insertion of a rod into the hole created by the captive bolt and agitation of the rod to destroy the brain) are acceptable secondary steps ONLY if the animal is confirmed unconscious.
- If using a penetrating captive bolt gun, the requirement for a secondary step depends on the model used.
- Secondary steps performed on an unconscious animal should be performed within 30 seconds of the first step (with the exception of a second injection, which is at the discretion of the veterinarian).