



# College of Veterinarians of British Columbia

## *Euthanasia Guidelines*

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to assist veterinarians in decision-making surrounding the euthanasia of animals.

### **Scope**

These guidelines apply to all CVBC registrants who perform or oversee the performance of euthanasia of any animal.

### **Guiding Principles**

The CVBC supports the CVMA position statement on euthanasia<sup>1</sup>: *“The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) holds that when animals are euthanized, death must be quick using a method that causes the least possible pain and distress. The most appropriate method of euthanasia may vary depending on animal species, age, weight, temperament, and health status.”*

**Necessity:** Euthanasia of animals is sometimes necessary, including when an animal is sick or injured and when medical care to alleviate pain and suffering is not feasible or there are no reasonable prospects for recovery.

**Responsibility:** Veterinarians have several, sometimes competing, responsibilities which they must consider.

- Veterinarians have a primary responsibility to ensure the welfare of the animals under their care.
- Veterinarians also bear responsibility to individual owners to provide guidance and offer alternatives to euthanasia where appropriate.
- Veterinarians have a responsibility to the humane community to ensure that euthanasia protocols for shelters, pounds and other institutions in which veterinarians provide euthanasia services are appropriately designed and that the protocols have been followed.

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<sup>1</sup> CVMA Position Statement: <https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/euthanasia>

- Veterinarians have a responsibility to the public to act in accordance with society's current values surrounding euthanasia, and to ensure the public's safety from fractious animals or from those with potentially dangerous zoonotic illnesses.
- Veterinarians are responsible to themselves as well: they must weigh their own personal ethical beliefs with their professional responsibilities.

Autonomy: Veterinarians have professional autonomy and are not obligated to perform euthanasia at the direction of an owner or institution.

Research animals: Euthanasia of animals used in research institutions is acceptable under the auspices of the Canadian Council on Animal Care.

Population control: Euthanasia of domestic animals is not an appropriate method of population control; however, euthanasia may be necessary if appropriate caregivers are not available. The veterinarian's role is to educate clients to find alternatives such as sterilization, re-homing, or surrendering to the SPCA or rescue group. Veterinarians should also counsel their clients to avoid creating situations in which mass depopulation might seem like the only alternative, e.g. businesses or farms housing too many animals.

## **Decision Making Responsibilities**

Before consenting to perform euthanasia, refusing to perform euthanasia, or recommending euthanasia, veterinarians should consider using the decision-making tool in Appendix I.

Documentation of Informed Consent: Veterinarians should document that they have gone through the process of obtaining informed consent with the owner or agent. This task should ideally not be delegated to staff, in order to avoid potential miscommunications.

- Preferably, animal owners/agents should sign a written consent form giving the veterinarian permission to perform euthanasia. See Appendix II for a sample form.
- If consent is given verbally (via telephone) or, in the case of a critical emergency, in person, it should be documented in the medical record. It is wise to have another party witness and document a verbal consent for euthanasia.
- To the best of his or her ability, the veterinarian should determine that the client is, in fact, the owner or agent. Veterinarians should use caution in situations where the owner is unknown (e.g. new client) or when a previously unknown family member of the owner presents a pet for euthanasia, particularly if the animal appears well.
- Animal owners or agents must be competent to provide informed consent and they should not be under the influence of alcohol or other substances. The veterinarian must use his or her best judgment to evaluate the circumstances.

### Establish or Renew VCPR:

- Ideally, appointments for client-requested euthanasia, when the procedure has not already been discussed with the veterinarian, should be framed as a consultation or quality of life appointment, to allow the veterinarian to gather the information necessary to review with the client a decision about euthanasia.
- Veterinarians should obtain a history and understand why an owner or agent is requesting euthanasia (i.e. is there a medical problem, a behavioural problem, a change in family circumstances).
- Veterinarians should examine the animal (unless they have recently done so), or understand how the owner/agent manages a facility (e.g. shelter), to make a reasonable decision about the appropriateness of euthanasia vs. treatment.
- Veterinarians should ensure that owners or agents understand the alternatives to euthanasia (i.e. medical treatment options, referral to a specialist, behavioural modification, finding a more suitable home, or referring to a rescue or shelter).
  - Although veterinarians may be reticent to bring up alternatives, for fear of upsetting the owner, it is part of a practitioner's responsibility to ensure that the owner/agent is aware of and understands any options that may be available. Often, simply disclosing this professional responsibility to the owner will help to alleviate anxiety. For example, "I'm sorry that Mitsy has been so ill, and I understand that you want to put her to sleep, but it is my responsibility, as a veterinarian, to tell you that there are some viable treatment alternatives for Mitsy.")
- When recommending euthanasia, veterinarians should clearly communicate their reasons for doing so, with sensitivity and compassion, and they should document their reasons in the medical record.

If a veterinarian agrees with the animal's owner that euthanasia is appropriate and consents to perform the service, he or she must euthanize in a timely manner, and must not dispose of the animal in any other way (keep the animal, re-home it, or similar).

### **Special Circumstances Surrounding Euthanasia**

#### 1. Animals in Critical Distress:

- "Critical Distress" is defined in the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act* as "distress in an animal of such a nature that
  - a) Immediate veterinary treatment cannot prolong the animal's life, or
  - b) Prolonging the animal's life would result in the animal suffering unduly."

Licensed veterinarians have the authority to euthanize an animal that they deem to be in critical distress, whether owned or un-owned, without authorization from the owner or

the BC SPCA. The BC SPCA Critical Distress Protocol (Appendix III) should be used to assess whether euthanasia is warranted.

- In the case of an emergency, when an animal is in critical distress and the owner of the animal is known, all reasonable efforts must be made to contact the owner. Veterinarians must provide supportive care, including pain management and relief of anxiety. The animal owner must be given a reasonable amount of time to respond and, if the owner is not responding, then the veterinarian should proceed with euthanasia if warranted.
- In the case of un-owned or stray, unknown animals in an emergency situation, veterinarians *may* contact the BC SPCA cruelty hotline (1-855-622-7722) for advice, but have no obligation to do so. If the animal is suffering with little or no chance of recovery, veterinarians should proceed with euthanasia.

## 2. Veterinarian Refusal to Euthanize:

- Veterinarians should consider the consequences of refusing to euthanize an animal (i.e. what will happen to the animal). This is particularly important when an ill or injured animal is hospitalized and would require transfer to another veterinary facility for treatment or euthanasia.
- Veterinarians refusing to perform euthanasia may refer the owner to another veterinarian whom they believe will likely proceed or otherwise assist.
- Veterinarians declining to perform euthanasia but agreeing to take control of the animal should seek written authorization from the owner/agent for relinquishment. See Appendix IV for a sample relinquishment form.
- If the veterinarian refuses the owner's request to euthanize (for example, in the case of a healthy animal), and believes that the animal will not be seen by another veterinarian and may come to harm at the hands of the owner, the veterinarian should consider reporting his or her concerns to the BC SPCA.

## 3. Owner Refusal to Authorize Euthanasia:

- If the owner or agent refuses to follow the veterinarian's advice to euthanize arising from concerns for the animal's well-being, and the veterinarian believes that the animal will consequently suffer, the veterinarian has a duty to report his or her concerns to the BC SPCA. See Appendix V for the *PCA Act* excerpt.
- If the owner or agent refuses to follow the veterinarian's recommendation to euthanize arising from concerns to public safety (e.g. dangerous dogs), the veterinarian should advise the clients of the need for compliance with municipal dangerous dog legislation.

## 4. Animals Dropped Off for Euthanasia Without Discussion:

- An undesirable situation can occur when an owner drops off an animal for euthanasia without prior discussion and approval by a veterinarian. Such situations can be avoided

by insisting that all euthanasia appointments be scheduled as consultations where the veterinarian is the only individual authorized to obtain consent for euthanasia. This will ensure that the owner and veterinarian agree on a course of action, whether it be euthanasia or an alternative.

#### 5. Euthanasia in Shelter Settings:

- While the BC SPCA has protocols in place which cover issues surrounding euthanasia (such as minimum holding times for animals), other shelters and pounds may not. It is important that veterinarians who are contracted to euthanize animals for a shelter confirm that the shelter is authorized by the municipality to euthanize animals, to know the shelter's protocol, and to ensure that the protocol is followed.

#### 6. Wild Animals:

- Veterinarians may occasionally be presented with injured or orphaned wild animals. The position of the Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy is that veterinarians are permitted to euthanize wild animals for humane reasons. However, special considerations exist for some species, and the Ministry may wish to pursue treatment or may want to recover the animal remains. See Appendix VI for more information.

### **Preparing to Perform Euthanasia**

Communication between and among veterinarians and staff is critical to ensure that the team is clear on its policies and practices. It is also important to adequately prepare the client, as noted below. All individuals who perform or assist in animal euthanasia must be adequately trained, including both technical knowledge and regulatory knowledge.

#### Delegation of euthanasia to non-veterinarians

- Non-veterinarian staff may carry out euthanasia under the direct supervision of a veterinarian, if they are adequately trained. "Direct Supervision" means that the veterinarian is on-site and sufficiently nearby the non-veterinarian staff member(s) to consult with the staff and provide assistance if needed. The exemption to this is for animals used in research under the direction of the Canadian Council on Animal Care.
- The veterinarian is ultimately responsible to both the client and the animal, even when delegating euthanasia to a non-veterinarian.
- An animal may not be left or moved until death is confirmed by the veterinarian.
- The confirmation of death is the veterinarian's responsibility.

## Client Communication and Sensitivity

- **Privacy:** It is the responsibility of the veterinarian and staff to provide privacy for the client before, during and after euthanasia of the animal. Examples may include providing a private room, separate facility exit from the main entrance, discussion and arrangement of payment in advance, and/or scheduling additional time.
- **Preparing clients for the process:** Animal euthanasia can be a highly stressful and emotional event for the owner. Discussion around euthanasia should occur as early in the VCPR as possible to avoid misunderstandings. Once the decision to euthanize has been reached and documented, the veterinarian or delegate should determine if the client wishes to be present during the process. If so, the following should be explained:
  1. The physical process of how the euthanasia is to be performed and the visible effects of euthanasia that may occur (including occasional unusual reactions).
  2. The length of time the process will take.
  3. Possible after-effects.
- **Grief:** Emotional states will vary from person-to-person regarding animal euthanasia. The veterinarian and staff may be able to console the client during and after the euthanasia or may ask that the client bring family or friends for support. The veterinarian should have a prepared list of organizations and hotlines for persons who experience severe grief. See Appendix VII for suggested web links.

## **Performing Euthanasia**

The act of euthanasia may be accomplished via a number of humane and scientifically-accepted methods. The method chosen should always be rapid, minimize pain, and cause the least possible anxiety and distress to the animal and the client. Veterinarians should refer to those guidelines published by the AVMA<sup>2</sup> and CCAC<sup>3</sup>. The methods of euthanasia that fit these criteria will be species-specific.

Euthanasia should take place as soon as possible after the animal has arrived on-site and consent has been obtained. In the case of animal suffering, animals must be euthanized without delay.

Animal handling must be done calmly, in order to reduce pain, fear and anxiety. When possible, for some animal species, a sedative, tranquilizer or other pharmaceutical should be used to minimize handling.

The preferred method for most companion animal and equine euthanasia is intravenous barbiturate, administered alone or following sedation or general anesthesia, as described in the AVMA guidelines.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.avma.org/kb/policies/documents/euthanasia](http://www.avma.org/kb/policies/documents/euthanasia)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Guidelines/Euthanasia.pdf>

## Confirmation of Death

- A licensed veterinarian must confirm death of the animal without delay and this must not be delegated to a non-registrant.
- The animal must be assessed for sensibility immediately and, if necessary, the euthanasia method must be re-applied, or an alternate method applied.
- In some cases, it is recommended to apply a second method to ensure death prior to disposal of the animal. For example, captive bolt euthanasia of cattle should be followed by another physical form of euthanasia such as exsanguination.

## Medical Records

Only licensed veterinarians are authorized to possess controlled substances used for euthanasia. Veterinarians must maintain a controlled drug log. The patient's medical records must contain the consent form or documented consent, details about methods of euthanasia, and instructions for the disposal of the animal.

## Practice Policies

Practices should have a process in place to humanely and efficiently euthanize animals in their care. Practices should consider establishing a written protocol to assist veterinarians and veterinary staff. Written policies or standard operating procedures will assist in setting out a well-thought procedure for veterinary staff to follow. The process should include:

- Veterinarian-obtained consent, and a standard consent form template.
  - Only veterinarians can obtain owner consent to euthanize an animal. It should be clear that technical staff and/or receptionists may not obtain consent and should not field suspicious calls regarding euthanasia.
  - If a consent form is not signed, verbal consent must be documented in detail
- Procedures to handle animals in critical distress.
- Procedures to handle critically-injured wild life.
- Defined staff responsibilities in each aspect of the euthanasia process
- Procedures to ensure owner privacy (see above), to prepare owners for the process, and to manage planned or unplanned owner grief.
- Procedures associated with disposal of animal remains and animals' possessions (e.g. collars, bedding, etc.).
- Procedures around the return of ashes/remains where appropriate.

- Support resources for staff members and veterinarians experiencing distress related to euthanasia should be identified and made available
- Herd/Flock/Pack health euthanasia policies
- Veterinarians involved in delivering herd health-type services (regardless of the species involved) should ensure that animal owners/managers are able to evaluate the need for euthanasia and are aware of appropriate methods for euthanasia in that species. Veterinarians should work with owners to establish appropriate decision-making guidelines.
- In cases of euthanasia of large numbers of animals (i.e. mass depopulation for health reasons), particular care must be taken to avoid fatigue in those euthanizing animals.

## Disposal of Remains

Disposal of animal remains should be done in accordance with local and provincial government regulation. Applicable provincial regulations are the *Environmental Management Act*<sup>4</sup>, the *Public Health Act*<sup>5</sup> and the *Wildlife Act*<sup>6</sup>.

Veterinarians should be aware of municipal by-laws that will dictate whether burial or composting of animals is permitted by owners in the municipality where they live or where they plan to bury an animal. Veterinarians should inform owners of potential problems associated with burying animals euthanized by pharmaceutical agents (i.e. barbiturate poisoning of raptors and scavengers).

If the veterinarian disposes of the animal remains, he or she must follow the relevant provincial and municipal bylaws or other legal requirements.

Veterinarians may contract with private cremation businesses and include this as an ancillary service. The veterinarian must ensure the service provided is legitimate to avoid liability.

## Previous Version

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/03053\\_00](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/03053_00)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/00\\_08028\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_08028_01)

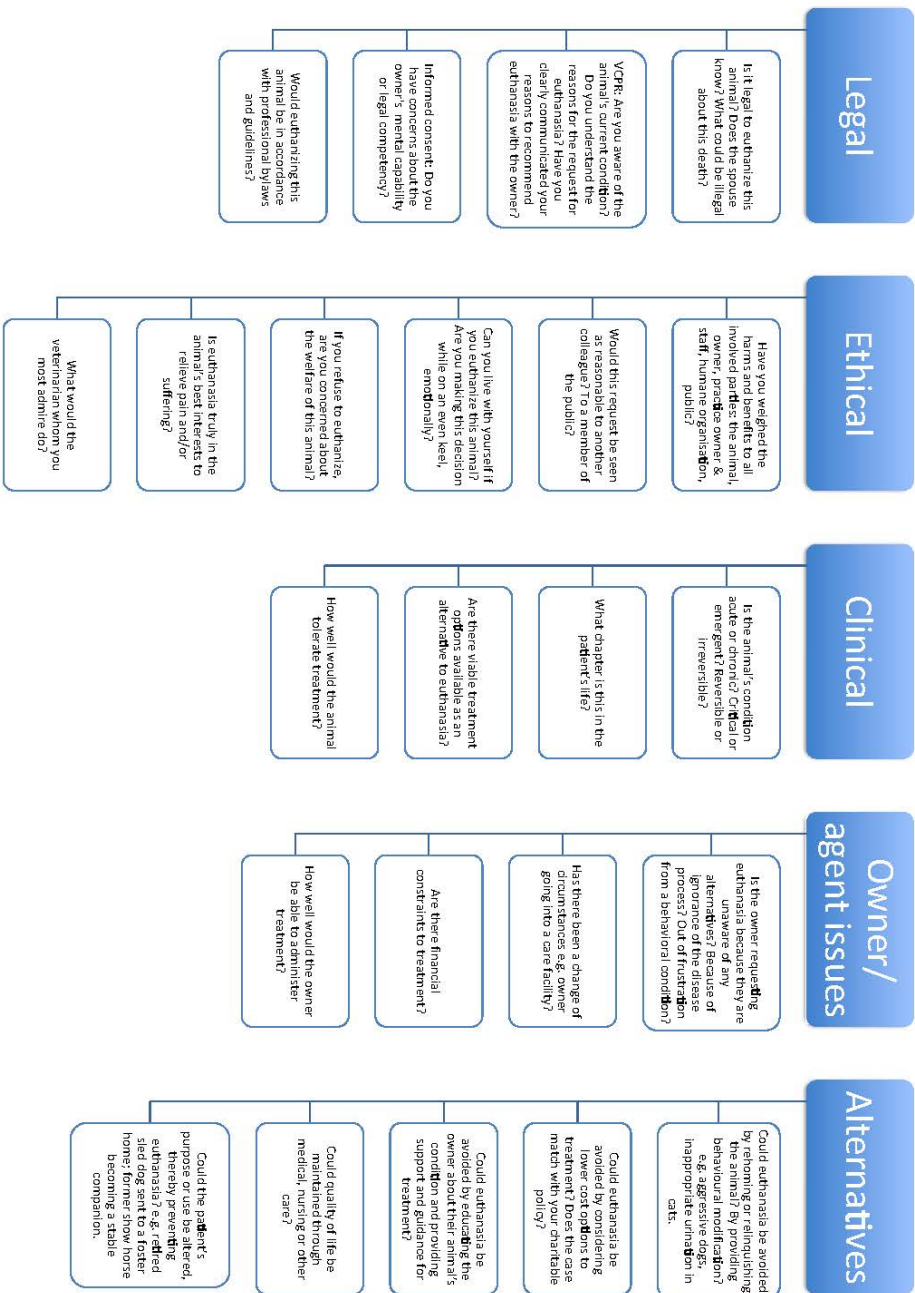
<sup>6</sup> [http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/00\\_96488\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96488_01)



## Appendices

- I. Euthanasia Decision Making Tool
- II. Euthanasia Consent Form
- III. BC SPCA Critical Distress Protocol
- IV. Relinquishment Consent Form
- V. Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act Excerpt
- VI. Euthanasia of Wild Animals
- VII. Grief Assistance Web Sites

## Elements of Euthanasia: Decision Making



## Appendix I: Euthanasia Decision Making Tool

## Appendix II: Euthanasia Consent Sample Form

*(Veterinary Hospital Name and Address)*

### Authorization for Euthanasia and/or Care of Remains

Owner/Agent Name:	Address:
Telephone:	E-mail:
Patient Name:	
Species:	Sex:
Breed:	DOB:

I am the owner, or duly authorized agent, for the above-mentioned animal.

I hereby authorize an agent of the VETERINARY HOSPITAL NAME to euthanize the above patient, forever releasing the VETERINARY HOSPITAL NAME and its staff from any and all liability for performing said euthanasia.

I also hereby grant the release of my pet to the PET CREMATORIUM NAME. I have read the options below and agree with its terms of service. My signature below authorizes ANIMAL HOSPITAL NAME and the PET CREMATORIUM NAME to carry out my cremation wishes. I further agree that I will indemnify and hold harmless the ANIMAL HOSPITAL NAME and the PET CREMATORIUM NAME, their officers and employees from any and all liability, cost, expenses or claims resulting from this authorization and subsequent disposition.

#### **Please indicate your decision for care of remains by initialing below:**

- Private Cremation: I understand that my pet will be cremated privately. (Ashes will be returned to the hospital in X-X days for pickup by owner). I understand that due to the nature of the cremation process, any valuable material will either be destroyed or not recovered.
- Communal Cremation: I understand that my pet will become part of a group cremation and that these remains cannot be returned to me (i.e. no ashes are returned). I understand that due to the nature of the cremation process, any valuable material will either be destroyed or not recovered.
- Return remains for personal disposition/burial.
- Please hold remains pending a decision. If I have not informed ANIMAL HOSPITAL NAME of our decision within X days, I authorize communal cremation and I am responsible for payment of this service.

Name (please print):	Signature:
Date:	
Witness Name (please print):	Witness Signature:

Learning the cause of death of your pet can be of great help in relieving the suffering of other pets, as well as contributing to our understanding of health and disease. Please consult the staff for more information on post-mortem examinations (autopsy).

# Appendix III: BC SPCA Critical Distress Protocol

## BCSPCA CRITICAL DISTRESS ASSESSMENT FORM

(for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of section 12 of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*)

Animal Identification

Species: \_\_\_\_\_ Breed \_\_\_\_\_ Tattoo/ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Colour: \_\_\_\_\_ App. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ App. Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Location where animal found or apprehended: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time of exam: \_\_\_\_\_

Clinical Findings

T: \_\_\_\_\_ HR: \_\_\_\_\_ P: \_\_\_\_\_ RR: \_\_\_\_\_ CRT: \_\_\_\_\_ MM Colour: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Consciousness: (see scale on reverse) \_\_\_\_\_

Level of suffering: (see scale on reverse) \_\_\_\_\_ Other Stress Factors: \_\_\_\_\_

Systems (describe physical findings/observation)

	Abnormal	Normal	Not Examined		Abnormal	Normal	Not Examined
[1] Neural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[2] Respiratory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[3] Cardiovascular	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[4] GIT/Abdominal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[5] Genitourinary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[6] Skeletal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[7] Skin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	[8] Eyes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[9] Others (specify)							


Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time Recommendation given: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX / PHONE

Veterinarian: \_\_\_\_\_ Special Constable: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

### Critical Decision Protocol

- 1) Is the animal suffering? (> or = 2 on the suffering scale)  
Yes - go to 2                      No - go to 6
- 2) Is treatment to reduce suffering to level 1 or below available and practical?  
Yes - go to 3                      No - go to 5
- 3) What is the prognosis for survival?  
Good/fair (>25%) - go to 4                      Poor (<25%) - go to 7
- 4) Will there be further exposure to suffering (as defined in 1) in the short term?  
Yes - go to 5                      No - go to 6
- 5) Is the suffering assessed to be Level 3?  
Yes - go to 7                      No - go to 6
- 6) Treat to relieve suffering if necessary and practical - **Euthanasia not recommended**
- 7) Treat to relieve suffering if available and practical - **Recommend Euthanasia**

### Suffering Scale: (Levels 0 to 3)

#### **0** Not suffering:

No apparent painful responses observed. Animal is acting within normally expected behavioural limits considering the species and situation. Physiologic data are normal, i.e. no evidence of tachycardia or tachypnea, pupil dilation, hyperthermia and other physical/physiological parameter that could not be attributed to the current environment.

#### **1** Mild suffering:

Animal may show pain response by guarding an affected region, showing a mild limp or resisting palpation; very mild or no depression but will continue to pursue normal behaviour for the situation it is in; may show interest in eating and playing; may have mild tachycardia and tachypnea and, pupil dilation only observed when the painful focus is approached.

#### **2** Moderate suffering:

Animal vocalizing discomfort (with or without contact); cannot settle easily, is restless or assumes an abnormal posture; avoid contact or aggressively resents contact with caregiver; cannot weight bear on affected area; severely guards or exhibits obvious pain response when affected area is palpated; tachypnea and tachycardia readily observable; and, pupil may be dilated upon being handled.

#### **3** Severe suffering:

Animal is depressed and does not care about its surroundings or is exhibiting extreme flight response despite obvious severe injuries; unable to settle or is semi-comatose; exaggerated vocalizing constantly or intermittently without any provocation, not interested in the environment or interacting with caregiver or exhibits extreme avoidance response; void without attempting to move; Tachypnea and possibly dyspnea, tachycardia, pupil dilation, trembling or shivering; sweating in equine species; and, hyperesthesia and/or hyperalgesia, hyperthermia relating to tissue damage.

### Consciousness Scale:

- A** Alert and responsive, interested in the environment.
- D** Depressed, not interested in the environment but readily respond to stimuli.
- S** Semi-comatose. Shows awareness to stimuli with no responses or weak responses.
- C** Comatose. No voluntary or involuntary responses to stimuli

## Appendix IV: Relinquishment Consent Sample Form

(Veterinary Hospital Name and Address)

### Authorization to Surrender Animal

	Person ID:
	Receipt:
	Receipt Date:
Agent/Owner Details	
Person Name:	
Person Address:	
Home Phone:	
Identification Type:	

Animal Detail						
Animal ID	Type	Breed	Mixed	Colour (1)	Colour (2)	Gender

I, the undersigned, being the owner, or having control of the animal described within and assuming all responsibility and releasing the VETERINARY HOSPITAL NAME of all risk and damage which may arise from whatever cause, do hereby surrender the said animal to the VETERINARY HOSPITAL NAME and its representatives. I also hereby agree to indemnify and save the VETERINARY HOSPITAL NAME harmless from all claims, actions or demands which may be made against it by anyone claiming to be the owner of said animal or otherwise. Persons surrendering the animal(s) are advised ownership is transferred to the VETERINARY HOSPITAL NAME and no information regarding animals will be released to previous owners.

Owner/Agent (Print Name):
Date:
Signature:
Witness Name (Print Name):
Witness Signature:

## Appendix V: Provincial Cruelty to Animals Act Excerpt

(RSBC 1996) CHAPTER 372 Current to December 20, 2017

### Relieving Critical Distress in Animals

- 12 (1) In this section, “**critical distress**” means distress in an animal of such a nature that
- (a) immediate veterinary treatment cannot prolong the animal’s life, or
  - (b) prolonging the animal’s life would result in the animal suffering unduly.
- (2) If, in the opinion of
- (a) a registered veterinarian, or
  - (b) an authorized agent, if a registered veterinarian is not readily available,
- an animal is in critical distress, the authorized agent may destroy the animal or have the animal destroyed.

### Duty to Report Distress

- 22.1 A registered veterinarian who believes on reasonable grounds that a person responsible for an animal is, or is likely, causing or permitting the animal to be in distress in contravention of this Act must promptly report, to the best of the registered veterinarian’s knowledge and belief, all of the following information to an authorized agent:
- (a) the reason for believing that an animal is in distress;
  - (b) sufficient information to contact the person responsible for the animal, including the person’s name and address;
  - (c) sufficient information to identify the animal.

### Immunity for Persons Who Report

- 25.2 (1) Subject to subsection (2), no legal proceeding for damages lies or may be commenced or maintained against a registered veterinarian because of anything done or omitted
- (a) in relation to the destruction of an animal under section 12(2), or
  - (b) in the making of a report as required under section 22.1.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a registered veterinarian in relation to anything done or omitted in bad faith.

## Appendix VI: Euthanasia of Wild Animals

### Ministry of the Environment - Wild Animal Euthanasia by Veterinarians:

Veterinarians may be requested to examine, treat and/or euthanize injured, sick or orphaned wild animals native to British Columbia (BC). Wild animals may be presented by government staff (biologists or Conservation Officers), wildlife rehabilitation facilities, municipal animal control or animal welfare organizations as well as the public. In some cases the treatment of traumatic injuries or other conditions can be initiated and the animals transferred as soon as possible to a permitted wildlife rehabilitator for long term care. However, there are limitations to what is possible, practical and humane for wild animal care due to their often limited ability to tolerate the stresses of capture, treatment and captivity. For some wild animals immediate euthanasia is not only the most humane option but the safest procedure for animal and humans. Under the BC Wildlife Act, any possession of any wildlife species requires a permit. However for situations that involve the emergency treatment or euthanasia of wild animals, BC wildlife management authorities (BC Ministries of Environment (MOE) and Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations (FLNRO)) recognize and respect the professional judgment of veterinarians and are highly appreciative of the veterinary community, their interest, compassion and cooperation in caring for BC's wildlife. Since there is no current mechanism for emergency access to wildlife permits, the Province will not be requiring permits for this purpose at this time. Veterinarians are requested to apply their professional judgment for short-term emergency treatment, or euthanasia, on wild animals. However, veterinarians are requested to keep records with the following data on site for all wild animals treated and held short term or euthanized:

- Species
- Age estimate (juvenile, adult)
- Sex, if obvious
- Condition (e.g. wing fracture, head trauma, respiratory distress)
- Animal fate (e.g. treated and transferred immediately to wildlife rehabilitator; treated, held 24-72 hours and transferred to wildlife rehabilitator; euthanized)

The appropriate method of euthanasia varies with the species; guidelines specific for species groups can be referred to online or contact the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian for details.

If the species is considered a species “of concern” or “at risk” wildlife managers ask that the appropriate regional office is notified of the wild animal and its condition as soon as possible. For most species their identification and conservation status can be assessed at the following website <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/toolintro.html>. For example, if a veterinarian on Vancouver Island is presented with a live or dead Vancouver Island marmot (a species at risk) they should immediately contact the FLNRO regional office in Nanaimo at 250 751-3100. Some species are extremely common, such as robins or crows, or are non-native such as starlings or Eastern grey squirrels. These species are not considered of conservation priority and do not require any notification.

Unusual or unexpected illnesses or mortalities are of interest to the BC Wildlife Health Program and collaborators for human, wild and domestic animal disease surveillance. Selected wild animal cases may be submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Health Centre and other laboratories when necessary for diagnostic testing, but require prior approval by the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian. See the Wildlife



Health Program website for further information on wildlife health and how to contact the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian at <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth/>.

Euthanized wild animals should be frozen and held for short periods of time but cannot be kept long term without a permit. Possession permits maybe available for some species, see: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/pasb/applications/#wildlifeact>. Some species have significant value for routine health testing or are required for other scientific, research or cultural (First Nation) values. These carcasses will be picked up by regional wildlife managers. For example, bald and golden eagle carcasses are used by many First Nations communities for ceremonial purposes and are distributed by regional offices. For these two species, please notify the local FLNRO regional office when carcasses are available.

If there are any further questions regarding specific wildlife species and their disposition please contact a regional FLNRO office.

For regional office contacts – see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/main/regions.html> and <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/offices.html>

To contact the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian or the Wildlife Health Program – see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth/>.

## Appendix VII: Grief Assistance Websites

Disclaimer: The Animal Welfare Committee of the CVBC does not specifically endorse or support these websites, nor is this a comprehensive list. They are here merely as a guide for registrants to aid their clients in the grieving process.

Pet Loss Canada <http://petlosscanada.com/>

Canadian Centre for Pet Loss Bereavement <http://www.petlosssupport.ca/>

Association of Pet Loss and Bereavement <http://aplb.org/index.php>

Pet Loss Grief Support Website <http://www.petloss.com/>