



Remains Care: Equine Options

Losing a beloved horse can be a difficult and confusing time. Planning ahead for how to handle a horse's remains can both honor the horse and help with the grieving process.

Burial

If you choose to bury your horse, there are several things to keep in mind.

First, did your horse have a contagious or communicable disease? If this is the case, burial should be avoided to prevent disease spread to other animals.

Second, what are local regulations for burying livestock? Many areas have specific regulations about burial. If burial is permitted, please remember to also check for buried utilities, water lines, and sewer lines.

Third, do you have the space and resources to bury your horse? Keep in mind the size of your horse, as well as what may be required to prepare a gravesite (location, width, and depth) that cannot be disturbed after burial. Digging a proper grave site often requires access to a backhoe. Without this equipment, rental or contracting fees can run into hundreds of dollars.

Fourth, horses who die at a veterinary clinic need to be transported to the farm or other burial site. It is important to consider not only

the equipment required for remains lifting and transport, but also the possibility of post-mortem injury to the body during this process.

Finally, burial is permanent. Should you leave your property for any reason the horse will remain in its burial place.

Cremation

Cremation involves an incinerator that reaches very high temperatures, removing all water from body tissues. Whole-body cremation can take up to 16 hours. Once the cremation process is finished, remaining bones are processed into cremains, or "ashes."

As with burial, there are a few things to keep in mind with cremation.

Transportation of remains

If your horse dies at home, do you have a cremation service that will pick up your horse? If they will, do you need to provide them with any special equipment? If they will not pick up your horse, how will you get the body to the cremation site?

Return of ashes and other mementos

If you would like to keep your horse's ashes and/or any other part of your horse's remains (such as surgical

implants or shoes), it will be important to ensure that your horse is individually cremated and that no parts of your horse's effects are discarded during that process. With mass (group) cremation, no ashes are returned.

Whole-body cremation

Whole-body horse cremation is conducted by Midwest Cremation Service of Minnesota (Anoka, Minn.). The price of a whole-body cremation is \$1,600 for those within a 50-mile radius of their facility, and pickup of remains can be arranged. Ashes from a full-body cremation can weigh up to 50 pounds, depending on the size of the horse, and your horse's ashes will be returned to you in a wooden box (included in the price of cremation).

Partial cremation

Partial cremation usually entails the cremation of what some people say are the most important parts of the horse: the head, the hooves, and the heart. The amount of ashes returned is much smaller than the amount returned with a full-body cremation. Your horse's ashes can be returned in an urn of your choosing, or can be returned to you in a velvet bag for transfer to an urn at a later time.

Other mementos

It can be useful to have personal, touchable mementoes of our horses (often called "linking objects"). It is important to ask for, or personally remove, anything you wish to keep, including shoes, a halter, tail hair, mane hair, or the forelock.

Lastly, it is important to make the cremation service aware if your horse was diseased or contagious. This will allow them to take the appropriate precautions to ensure that the disease is not spread throughout their facility or the pickup location.

Mass disposal

Mass disposal is a chemical cremation process offered by the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Mass disposal breaks down body tissues through a combination of heat and enzymes. This process is environmentally friendly, budget-friendly, and guaranteed to destroy dangerous pathogens. Should you choose mass disposal, no cremains will be returned to you.

Rendering service

Rendering services are available throughout this community. These services will pick up horse remains at your farm or facility for disposal.