

AVMA GUIDELINES FOR THE EUTHANASIA OF ANIMALS (2013 EDITION)

HISTORY OF THE PANEL ON EUTHANASIA

The AVMA Panel on Euthanasia (POE) was first convened in 1963 to create guidelines for veterinarians who carry out or oversee the euthanasia of animals. As the guidelines have become increasingly influential, and in some cases recognized as a legal standard, the specificity and scope of the guidelines have broadened with subsequent editions. Over time, revisions to the document have included coverage of more methods and species, information about animals' physiologic and behavioral responses to euthanasia, euthanasia's effects on those performing and observing it, and the economic feasibility and environmental impacts of various approaches.

The *AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (2013 Edition)* was created by a greatly expanded group of experts having diverse expertise and experience in the various facets and applications of euthanasia. The Guidelines are the result of more than 3 years of deliberation by more than 60 individuals, including veterinarians, animal scientists, behaviorists, psychologists, and an animal ethicist. A comment period allowed AVMA members an opportunity to provide input and share their experiences directly with POE members. The POE remains as an AVMA entity, with oversight by the AVMA's Animal Welfare Committee, to consider responses to questions, new data, and future updates.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES SINCE THE 2007 EDITION

SPECIES-SPECIFIC SECTIONS

In addition to the sections describing various techniques in detail (inhaled, noninhaled and physical methods), specific advice is provided for the euthanasia of companion animals, laboratory animals, animals farmed for food and fiber, equids, avians, fish and aquatic invertebrates, and captive and free-ranging nondomestic animals. Recommendations relating to a particular species may be located within the guidelines by using Appendix 1 "Agents and methods of euthanasia by species," which references the section(s) within the document that should be consulted. New figures and tables provide helpful guidance in the application of specific techniques.

WIDER CONSIDERATIONS

Information has been included about key concerns outside of the immediate performance of a euthanasia technique (i.e., euthanasia is approached as a process, rather than as an isolated event). This includes advice on ethical decision making, consideration of the various environments in which euthanasia is conducted, handling of animals, confirmation of death, and disposal of animal remains. Collection of animals for scientific investigations, euthanasia of injured or diseased wildlife, and handling of animals under field conditions are also addressed.

SLAUGHTER AND DEPOPULATION IN SEPARATE DOCUMENTS

One area identified as needing additional guidance upon review of the last iteration of the Guidelines was depopulation (ie, the rapid destruction of large numbers of animals in response to emergencies, such as the control of catastrophic infectious diseases or exigent situations caused by natural disasters). Depopulation may employ euthanasia techniques, but not all depopulation methods meet the criteria for euthanasia. Because they do not always meet the criteria for euthanasia, these techniques will be addressed in a separate document, the AVMA Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals.

Similarly, because methods used for slaughter may also not meet all the conditions necessary to be deemed euthanasia, these techniques will be addressed by a third document, the AVMA Guidelines for the Humane Slaughter of Animals.

'CONDITIONALLY ACCEPTABLE' REPLACED WITH 'ACCEPTABLE WITH CONDITIONS'

Techniques are categorized as 'acceptable', 'acceptable with conditions', or 'unacceptable'. The replacement of 'conditionally acceptable' with 'acceptable with conditions' is intended to signal that 'acceptable' and 'acceptable with conditions' techniques are to be considered equally satisfactory so long as the stated conditions are met.