



# Euthanasia of Shelter Animals

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The Association of Shelter Veterinarians believes animals selected for euthanasia must be provided with a physically and emotionally humane and dignified death which is as gentle and rapid as possible.

The most humane method of euthanasia should be chosen deliberately based on the individual animal and circumstances. Sedation prior to euthanasia is recommended in most circumstances, and strongly recommended for distressed, dangerous, and fractious animals. In most cases, euthanasia is best achieved with an intravenous or intraperitoneal injection of sodium pentobarbital. Intracardiac injections may only be performed on anesthetized or unconscious animals. The ASV does not support the use of any methods deemed unacceptable by the AVMA for routine euthanasia of shelter animals.<sup>1</sup>

Every organization should have a written protocol that outlines key considerations, including delivery methods and agents, handling techniques, equipment use, facilities, record keeping, and the physical and mental safety of personnel performing euthanasia. Administration of injectable medications may require two trained people for safe and humane handling. Staff training must be in accordance with state requirements, and should include animal behavior and restraint, the proper use of equipment, and the variety of euthanasia drugs available and their effects.<sup>2</sup> The AVMA maintains an online list of requirements for euthanasia personnel by state.<sup>3</sup>

The ASV believes the use of carbon monoxide for individual or mass companion animal euthanasia in shelters is unacceptable due to significant humane, operational and safety concerns.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition.

<https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/2020-Euthanasia-Final-1-17-20.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Humane Society of the United States. (2013) Euthanasia Reference Manual.

<http://www.animalsheltering.org/resources/all-topics/euthanasia/euthanasia-reference-manual.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> AVMA State Euthanasia Laws (2019) <https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Euthanasia-Chart.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Association of Shelter Veterinarians. (2019) Carbon Monoxide Inhalation as a Method of Euthanasia. <https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/position-statements/CO%20Position%20Statement%20and%20Background%20Final%20Version.pdf>

The mission of the ASV is to advance and support the practice of shelter medicine in order to improve community animal health and well-being.