

A HARBOURSIDE GUIDE FOR HORSE FAMILIES

Equine End-of-Life Planning & Aftercare

A calm, practical guide for the decisions you may face
with your horse — before urgency arrives.

Prepared with care for owners, studs and equestrian families
across NSW & SE Queensland

For horse owners

Planning is an act of love.

If you have opened this guide, you are doing one of the most generous things a horse owner can do: thinking about the end of your horse's life before you have to.

Decisions made in calm are kinder — to your horse, to your family, and to you. This guide walks through the choices most families face, in language that does not assume you are a vet or an undertaker. Take what helps. Set the rest aside.

Knowing when it is time

There is no single moment. Most horse owners describe a slow accumulation — more bad days than good, weight harder to maintain, the spark gradually quieter. Your vet is the right clinical voice. But you, who knows this horse better than anyone, are the right intuitive voice.

A simple framework

- **Quality of life:** Can they still do the small things they love? Roll, graze, greet you at the gate?
- **Pain management:** Is comfort still possible with reasonable intervention?
- **Bad-day ratio:** Are good days outnumbered, or rare?
- **Dignity:** Would another season ask too much of them?

“Better a week early than a day late.” — an old horseman's saying, and a kind one.

Working with your vet

The conversation

Most equine vets will speak frankly when asked directly. 'If she were yours, what would you do?' is a fair question and almost always answered honestly. Write down what you hear — grief makes detail slippery.

Where and when

On-property euthanasia is the kindest option for most horses — they are home, on familiar ground, with their people. Choose a quiet day. Avoid weekends if you want a small audience of family present. Morning is often easier than afternoon — no long wait, and aftercare logistics are simpler.

Sedation and process

Modern equine euthanasia is calm and quick. Your vet will explain the sequence. You can ask to be present or not — both are right. Some owners stay through; others say goodbye and step back. Neither is braver.

Aftercare options

1. Individual cremation

Your horse is collected, cremated individually (one chamber, one horse) and the ashes are returned to you. This is what Harbourside provides. Suited to families who want their horse home, or who want to scatter on a meaningful property.

2. On-property burial

Where council regulations allow, on-property burial is a traditional choice. Requires excavator access, a site clear of waterways and services, and depth requirements that vary by council.

3. Knackery / rendering

An honest option for some families and circumstances. It is not an undignified choice — it is simply a different one. Worth understanding so you can choose what feels right for your horse.

Choosing

There is no correct answer. The right choice is the one you can stand quietly beside afterwards. Most families decide based on a combination of what feels right, what their land allows, and what their budget supports.

If you choose Harbourside

How collection works

We arrive with purpose-built lifting and transport equipment. Two-person crew. We collect from paddock, stable or yard — anywhere a vehicle can reasonably reach. The team moves at your pace; nothing is rushed.

Timing

Where possible, we coordinate with your vet so collection happens within hours of euthanasia. Where distance or weather makes that impossible, we arrange respectful interim care.

SafeHarbour Verification

Every horse we collect is tagged with a numbered identifier that stays with them until ashes are sealed. Identification is reconciled at collection, at receiving, at the chamber and at sealing — by two people, in writing.

Return

Equine cremation typically takes 10–14 business days. We return ashes by hand-delivery where distance allows, or by tracked courier. Urns range from simple timber boxes to larger pieces suited to a horse's volume.

Decisions worth making now

These are the questions you will be asked at the hardest moment. Decide them while you can think clearly.

- Which vet will you call?
- Where on the property will the euthanasia happen?
- Who will be present? (Adults, children, paddock companions?)
- Which aftercare option — cremation, burial, knackery?
- If cremation: which urn, scattered or kept?
- Will you want a paw-print, hoof-print, mane or tail keepsake?
- Who needs to be told? (Trainer, farrier, stud, riding club, insurer.)
- Is there a paddock companion who will need a careful transition?

Write the answers in a simple page and keep it where someone else could find it. This is one of the kindest gifts a horse owner can leave for the people who love them.

After — the companion horse

Horses are deeply social. The companion left behind often grieves visibly — calling, refusing food, pacing the fence line. There are a few things that help:

- Let them see the body where possible. Most horses settle markedly after this.
- Maintain routine. Feed times, paddock rotation, riding schedule.
- Consider a temporary companion if grief is severe. A small pony, a goat, even close human presence.
- Allow time. Most companions adjust within 2–6 weeks. Some take longer.

“Horses understand more about death than we give them credit for. They need the same things we do — to see, to grieve, to be allowed time.”

When you're ready to talk

There is no obligation in calling us — and no clock on the conversation. Many horse owners ring months before they need to, just to know who they would call when the day came. That is exactly the right reason to call.

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With our care,

Alby & Rachael Koster

Harbourside Pet & Equine Cremations