

HARBOURSIDE

PET & EQUINE CREMATIONS

PRACTICAL GUIDE

What To Do When Your Horse Dies

A practical, compassionate checklist



INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- First-hours checklist
- What to consider before collection
- Aftercare decisions — questions to ask
- Paperwork, insurance and notifications
- Caring for your remaining horses

6 PAGES

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Written for the families we sit with.

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First, breathe

If your horse has just died, or is about to, this page is the only one that matters right now. Everything else in this booklet can wait until tomorrow.

- You do not have to make every decision today.
- Nothing you decide in the next hour is irreversible if you take a breath first.
- You are allowed to sit with your horse. There is no rush.
- Call one person. You should not do the phone calls alone.

THE FIRST HOURS — A CHECKLIST

1. Make the area safe. Move other animals, children and traffic away if you need to.
2. Call your vet if death was unexpected, or if you need help confirming it.
3. Decide who needs to know today. It is usually a shorter list than it feels.
4. Note the date and time. You will need it for paperwork, insurance and microchip records.
5. Take a photograph if you want one. Many families later wish they had; nobody has told us they regretted it.
6. Take a clipping of hair, or a print, if that matters to you. Ask us and we will do it for you.
7. Call an aftercare provider to arrange collection. We answer the phone 24 hours.
8. Eat something. Drink water. Sit down.

Before collection

There are a few small things that are easier to think about now than afterwards.

- Do you want anything to stay with your horse — a rug, a blanket, a toy, a note, a favourite halter or collar?
- Do you want any of those items returned to you afterwards? Tell us clearly, and we will record it on your file.
- Do you want a paw print, nose print, or hair clipping taken before the cremation?
- Do you want to be present for collection, or would you rather not be there? Both are completely normal.
- Is there anyone who wants to say goodbye first — a child, a partner, a rider, a neighbour?
- Where would you like us to meet you, and is there gate access for a vehicle?

WHAT WE DO WHEN WE ARRIVE

We arrive quietly, in an unmarked vehicle, at a time you choose. We introduce ourselves, take our time, and we never hurry you. Your horse is covered and handled with two people wherever possible. If you would like a moment before we leave, we will step away and wait.

Aftercare decisions — the questions to ask

Any provider you speak to should be able to answer all of these without hesitation. If they cannot, keep calling.

- Is the cremation individual, and can I verify that? Ask what proof they provide.
- Where does the cremation physically take place, and can I attend or witness it?
- How long will it take, and how will you keep me informed along the way?
- What will be returned to me, and in what form?
- Can I choose the urn or vessel, and can I supply my own?
- What happens to any personal belongings I send along?
- Is there a certificate, and what is on it?
- What are the total costs, including collection and travel?

INDIVIDUAL VERSUS COMMUNAL

An individual cremation means your animal is cremated alone and the ashes returned to you are theirs. A communal cremation means several animals together, with no ashes returned. Both are legitimate choices, and cost is a perfectly good reason to choose one over the other. What matters is that you are told plainly which one you are buying.

Paperwork and notifications

- Microchip registry — update the record so you stop receiving reminders.
- Insurance — most policies require notification within a set number of days.
- Council registration — cancel or update it.
- Vet clinic — ask them to flag the file so no vaccination reminders arrive.
- Pet food or medication subscriptions — cancel these early; the deliveries are brutal.
- Any agistment, farrier, or regular service bookings.
- Breed societies, clubs, or competition registrations where relevant.

It is entirely reasonable to ask a friend to make these calls for you.

Caring for your remaining horses

Animals grieve, and they grieve differently from us. Expect changes for a week or two, and watch for anything that goes beyond low mood.

- Keep routines as steady as you can — feeding times especially.
 - Watch appetite and water intake closely for the first 72 hours.
 - Some animals search, call, or wait by a gate or a door. This usually settles.
 - Allow them to see the body if it is safe and practical; many settle faster when they do.
 - Call your vet if you see refusal to eat or drink, colic signs, lethargy, or any sudden change.
 - Do not rush into a replacement companion. Give everyone, including yourself, a few weeks.
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IF YOU NEED US

Harbourside Pet & Equine Cremations answers the phone at any hour. You are welcome to call even if you have not decided anything yet, and even if you end up going elsewhere.