

NCVMA POSITION STATEMENT

EUTHANASIA

The word “euthanasia” comes from the Greek terms *eu* meaning “good” and *thanatos* meaning “death”. A “good death” may be defined as one that occurs with minimal pain and distress. In the context of this position statement, euthanasia is the act of inducing humane death in an animal. It is our responsibility as veterinarians and human beings to ensure that if an animal’s life must be ended, it is done with dignity, respect, and with minimal pain and suffering. Euthanasia should be performed only by a licensed veterinarian or properly trained and certified personnel.

The NCVMA supports euthanasia of unwanted animals when there is no alternative choice of disposition. We support euthanasia of critically ill or injured animals when the owners cannot or will not assume financial responsibility for proper medical care, and there is no alternate choice for relief from pain and suffering. Written authorization by the animal’s owner or authorized agent should be obtained prior to euthanasia of said animal whenever humanely possible.

If the animal to be euthanized has bitten or scratched a human or other animal, or otherwise potentially exposed any person or other animal to rabies in the past (10) days, a rabies test must be performed.

Euthanasia must be performed as soon as practicable upon written authorization by the animal’s owner or agent.