

## Euthanasia Scenarios

1. **Scenario #1 - Older cat with medical and behavior problems.** [Ronnie Whittington](#). An owner surrenders his 12-year-old cat, a spayed female. The reason for surrender is the cat's chronic house-soiling problems. The cat is obese and infested with fleas; he has severe gum disease, is missing several teeth, and needs additional dentistry. The cages in the shelter are full when this cat is surrendered. What do you do?
2. **Scenario #2 - Feral cats.** [Thomas Campitiello](#). Mr. Brown has approximately 10 feral cats living in his yard and has been feeding them for more than a year. He decides he doesn't want any of these cats and wants to bring them all to the animal shelter. After several long conversations with shelter staff, Mr. Brown decides he would miss the cats and would like to keep a few of them if they can be sterilized. Now that he knows more about feral cat care, Mr. Brown wants to keep three cats if the shelter will pay for the vaccinations and sterilization. He still wants to bring the other seven cats to the shelter. What would you do with the other seven feral cats he surrenders to the shelter?
3. **Scenario #3 - Unsterilized pit bull with unknown history.** [Dr. Prior](#). A woman living in a low-income housing area brings in a 1½-year-old, unspayed pit bull mix she found in her neighborhood. The shelter monitors the dog for 10 days, and no one comes forward to claim her. The dog is well-behaved in the kennel and doesn't give staff any trouble. But when a staff member does a temperament test to evaluate the dog, she is very mouthy and snappy whenever she's excited or restrained. Would you make this dog available for adoption?
4. **Scenario #4 - Stray cat with FIV.** [Jackie Ortiz](#). Animal Control brings in a female cat who needs to be quarantined for rabies after biting someone. It is apparent that the cat has recently had a litter of kittens, and the next day, her three 10-day-old kittens are found and also brought to the shelter. At the end of the quarantine, shelter staff decide to put the mom and her kittens into foster care until the kittens are old enough to be returned to the shelter and adopted; the mother will then be spayed and placed into a new home. Before placing the cats in the foster home, the shelter administers a routine blood test and discovers the mother cat is positive for FIV. What would you do now?
5. **Scenario #5 - Too many cats.** [Joseph Davis](#). It is the middle of August, and there are three empty cat cages at the shelter. The weekend is approaching—a time when many animals are adopted, but also the busiest days for relinquishment of pets. The shelter is very crowded, and the reality is that some animals might have to be euthanized. The cats being considered for euthanasia include a delightful, unneutered, two-year-old cat who has just come out of quarantine for biting; a painfully shy cat the staff has been trying to help; a five-year-old female cat who has already been here for four months; three cats from a little old lady who died recently—cats who all appear healthy but are 8, 10, and 12 years old; and a pregnant cat who is about to have her kittens. How do you decide which cats must be euthanized?
6. **Scenario #6 - Rabies risk.** [Justin Hernandez](#). A cat, reportedly abandoned by someone who moved away, is turned into the shelter in September. After four days, a wound on the cat's ear that was not originally apparent abscesses, swells, and bursts; two puncture wounds are found on the ear. The ear is cleaned and shaved; no veterinarian can determine what caused the wound. Keeping in mind the rabies-related guidelines on placing animals with wounds of unknown origin, would you make this cat available for adoption?
7. **Scenario #7 - Stray elderly cat.** [Matthew Anderson](#). Scott opens the front door to his apartment building and a cat rushes in. Scott has never seen the cat before and he brings her to the shelter. The cat is a lovely, sweet cat, definitely elderly; although the veterinarian can't provide an exact age, he estimates the cat is probably at least 10 years old. The veterinary exam indicates the cat is underweight, has a heart murmur, and should have blood work completed to rule out diabetes, a thyroid condition, or kidney disease. The cat also needs dentistry work done. No one reports her missing or claims her, in spite of the fact that Scott posts "FOUND" signs all over his neighborhood and apartment building. After her stray-holding period, do you make her available for adoption?

8. **Scenario #8 - Untrained dog.** x. Your shelter helps another overcrowded shelter by taking in some of its dogs and attempting to place them. One is a timid, unspayed female. Temperament testing by staff indicates that she is calm but suspicious, scared, and nervous. She pays little attention to people, and is aloof and insecure. She really doesn't like to be touched, and it is hard to motivate her to play with toys. She is not housetrained. The shelter spends several months working with her, encouraging her to play. Volunteers take her on long walks, and she attends obedience classes every week. She is nervous one minute, jumpy and crazy the next, but she doesn't have a mean or aggressive bone in her body. She is returned after one adoption; the adopter says she was just too much to handle and behaved destructively when left by herself. Do you put her up for adoption again?
9. **Scenario #9 - Euthanasia requested by owner.** x. Over the course of 18 months, a young neutered male husky/shepherd mix comes into the shelter three times. The dog regularly runs loose, as evidenced by the number of times he has been picked up by animal control. The owner and the animal control officers have had numerous conversations about leash laws, licensing laws, and requirements to confine the dog. The third visit to the shelter is the result of the dog killing a cat on one of his excursions. The owners of the cat are furious. The owner of the dog requests that the shelter euthanize her dog. Do you honor that request?

## SOP's and Regulation

10. Why is it important for every shelter to have a written protocol for performing euthanasia? What should be included in a euthanasia policy? [Ronnie Whittington](#)
11. How should controlled drugs be stored and tracked? How much pentobarbital should be kept in the shelter? [Thomas Campitiello](#).
12. What is the DEA? Define DEA Schedules I-V for controlled drugs, and which schedule pentobarbital falls under. What is direct DEA Licensing? Does Texas allow it for animal shelters? [Dr. Prior](#).
13. Why is it important for shelters to document numbers of animals euthanized, and reasons for euthanasia? [Jackie Ortiz](#)
14. Once an animal is slated for euthanasia, why is it so important to carry it out quickly? [Joseph Davis](#)

## Performing Euthanasia

15. Explain the 5 stages of euthanasia. [Justin Hernandez](#)
16. Describe proper procedure for confirming death. Why is it so important? [Matthew Anderson](#)
17. What drugs are commercially available for euthanasia, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each? x
18. Describe the steps of euthanasia by IV injection of pentobarbital, including drug dose. What are advantages and disadvantages of IV euthanasia, as compared to intraperitoneal (IP) or per os (PO)? x
19. Which veins can be used for IV administration of pentobarbital? What are some indications that the drug may be going outside of the vein rather than into it (called extravasation)? x
20. Describe the steps of euthanasia by IP injection of pentobarbital, including drug dose, where it is given, and how long to wait to confirm death. What are the advantages of IP injection as compared to IV and PO? x

21. What are indications that an animal needs pre-euthanasia sedation or anesthesia? What drugs should be used, and what drugs should be avoided? [x](#)
22. How is PO euthanasia carried out? What are the dangers? [x](#)
23. What equipment for routine use (not emergency equipment) should be present in the euthanasia room? [x](#)
24. Under what circumstances is intracardiac (IC) injection of pentobarbital acceptable? [x](#)
25. What are the advantages and disadvantages of carbon monoxide (CO) euthanasia chambers? Are they legal in all states in the US? [x](#)
26. What is a butterfly catheter, and why do some like to use it for euthanasia? What is a luer lock syringe, and why is it preferred for euthanasia? [x](#)
27. When euthanizing a mother and her puppies/kittens, which should be euthanized first? [x](#)

### Possible Problems

28. What steps should be taken if a euthanasia technician is injured by a bite or accidental injection? What emergency equipment should be present in the euthanasia room? ? [Ronnie Whittington](#)
29. What steps should be taken if death can not be confirmed 5 minutes after euthanasia by sodium pentobarbital injection? [Thomas Campitiello](#).
30. Why does it take so long for reptiles to succumb to euthanasia? How do you confirm death in a reptile? [Dr. Prior](#).

### Euthanasia Related Stress

31. What is the Caring-Killing Paradox? [Jackie Ortiz](#)
32. What are the signs of ERS (Euthanasia Related Stress)? What can be done to minimize it? [Joseph Davis](#)

### Other Euthanasia Related Issues

33. Define "euthanasia." As it is truly defined, is euthanasia common at animal shelters? [Justin Hernandez](#)
34. What are the 12 AVMA Criteria for "Good Death"? [Matthew Anderson](#)
35. What are advantages and disadvantages of a shelter having a crematorium? [x](#)
36. Should shelters perform owner requested euthanasia? Under what circumstances? Should adoptable pets be euthanized on owner request? Should a fee be collected? [x](#)
37. Is it possible for dog and cat body parts to make their way into pet foods, if sent to a rendering plant? [x](#)
38. Approximately how many pets are euthanized at animal shelters yearly in the US and Canada? [x](#)