



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Veterinary Medical Examining Board

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Senate Committee on Business and General Government

Senator Chuck Riley, Chair

Senator Fred Girod, Vice-chair

Members: Senator Michael Dembrow, Senator Mark Hess, Senator Alan Olsen

Re: SB 71, Euthanasia Facility Drug Protocol

Dear Chair Riley, Vice-chair Girod, and Members:

The Veterinary Medical Board (OVMEB) is pleased to present SB 71, which amends ORS 475.185 to allow registered euthanasia facilities to purchase sedatives and analgesia for humane administration of euthanasia to shelter animals.

The definition of euthanasia is 'a humane death.' OVMEB rules for administration of euthanasia require compliance with guidelines of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Society of Shelter Veterinarians. These guidelines require delivery of pain- and stress-free euthanasia, which in turn requires ability to sedate and manage pain. Relevant excerpts of these guidelines are appended.

In Oregon shelters, except in emergencies, animals may be euthanized only via intravenous injection (IV) of sodium pentobarbital. With the proper dosage, this will induce death; however it does not guarantee a pain- or stress-free death. Animals selected for euthanasia are most often under considerable stress due to severe illness or injury, or aggressive behavior or temperament that makes them unadoptable. IV injection for such animals is potentially dangerous for the person giving the injection and adds stress and suffering for the animal at the end of its life. Oregon shelters that do not have a staff veterinarian or only limited access to a veterinarian may be unable to order appropriate pain and sedative medications when needed.

Passing SB 71 will empower shelter staff to assure that shelter animals experience peaceful and pain-free death when euthanasia is the only option. We thank you for the opportunity to present this bill, and respectfully request your support.

Sincerely,

Emilio E. DeBess, DVM, MPH

Board Chair

Oregon Public Health Veterinarian



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Notes:

OAR 875-040-0000 Certified Euthanasia Technicians (CETs)

No person not licensed as a veterinarian shall perform euthanasia or administer sodium pentobarbital unless the person is certified by the Board. CETs shall administer euthanasia in conformance with the 2010 Association of Shelter Veterinarians (SVA) Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Euthanasia for small animals and the 2011 American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines on Euthanasia for large animals. Under ORS 609.405, lethal injection of sodium pentobarbital is the only approved method for the euthanasia of dogs and cats by an animal control agency, humane society or subcontractor thereof.

AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2013 Edition 13

...techniques that result in “rapid loss of consciousness” and “minimize pain and distress” should be strived for, even where it is difficult to determine that these criteria have been met.

15.2 PAIN AND ITS PERCEPTION

Criteria for painless death can be established only after the mechanisms of pain are understood... the choice of a euthanasia agent or method is less critical if it is to be used on an animal that is anesthetized or unconscious, provided that the animal does not regain consciousness prior to death...Euthanasia methods should be employed that minimize the potential for distress or pain in all animal taxa, and these methods should be modified as new taxa-specific knowledge of their physiology and anatomy is acquired.

15.3 STRESS AND DISTRESS

An understanding of the continuum that represents stress and distress is essential for evaluating techniques that minimize any distress experienced by an animal being euthanized. Stress has been defined as the effect of physical, physiologic, or emotional factors (stressors) that induce an alteration in an animal’s homeostasis or adaptive state.⁷⁵ The response of an animal to stress represents the adaptive process that is necessary to restore the baseline mental and physiologic state. These responses may involve changes in an animal’s neuroendocrinologic system, autonomic nervous system, and mental status that may result in overt behavioral changes. An animal’s response varies according to its experience, age, species, breed, and current physiologic and psychological state, as well as handling, social environment, and other factors.^{76,77} ...

16. MECHANISMS OF EUTHANASIA

... Ideally, euthanasia methods should result in rapid loss of consciousness, followed by cardiac or respiratory arrest and the subsequent loss of brain function. Loss of consciousness should precede loss of muscle movement. Agents and methods that prevent movement through muscle paralysis, but that do not block or disrupt the cerebral cortex or equivalent structures (eg, succinylcholine, strychnine, curare, nicotine, potassium, or magnesium salts), are not acceptable as sole agents for euthanasia of vertebrates because they result in distress and conscious perception of pain prior to death.

...Intravenous injections deliver euthanasia agents directly into the vascular system, allowing for rapid distribution of the agent to the brain or neural centers, resulting in rapid loss of consciousness (for some invertebrates with closed circulatory systems, intrahemolymph injection is considered analogous to IV injection).²⁸¹ When the restraint necessary for giving an animal an IV injection is likely to impart added distress to the animal or pose undue risk to the operator, sedation, anesthesia, or an acceptable alternate route or method of administration should be used. Aggressive or fearful animals should be sedated prior to restraint for IV administration of the euthanasia agent. Paralytic immobilizing agents (eg, neuromuscular blocking agents) are unacceptable as a sole means of euthanasia, because animals under their influence remain awake and able to feel pain.... Aggressive or fearful animals should be sedated prior to restraint for IV administration of the euthanasia agent.

Association of Shelter Veterinarians: Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters 2014

When performing euthanasia in a shelter, each individual animal must be treated with respect (AVMA 2007). A veterinarian with appropriate training and expertise for the species involved should be consulted to ensure that proper procedures are used. Any euthanasia method used in a shelter must quickly induce loss of consciousness followed by death, while ensuring the death is as free from pain, distress, anxiety, or apprehension as possible. ... To avoid causing undue stress and anxiety, the least amount of physical restraint necessary to perform the procedures safely must be used. Pre-euthanasia drugs should be administered to animals who are aggressive, severely distressed or frightened. The most appropriate pre-euthanasia drugs are anesthetics...

Agencies Currently Registered as Euthanasia Facilities

Audobon Society of Portland*	Josephine County Animal Control
Clackamas County Dog Services*	Klamath Humane Society
Columbia County Animal Control	Lane County Animal Services*
Coos County Animal Control	Lincoln County Animal Shelter
Dallas Police Dept.	Linn County Sheriff's Office Animal Control
Douglas County Animal Control	Marion County Dog Control and Shelter*
Friends of Pets, Klamath Falls	Multnomah County Animal Services*
Heartland Humane Society	Oregon Humane Society*
Homeward Bound Pet Shelter	Saving Grace Pet Adoption
Hood River County Sheriff	Washington County Animal Control*
Humane Society of Central Oregon	Wildlife Images Rehabilitation/Education Center
Jackson County Animal Services	Willamette Humane Society*

*Has full or part-time veterinarian on staff.