

“To ensure the most humane euthanasia for a broad variety of animals as well as safe environment for animal shelter personnel, we should insist that all acceptable types of euthanasia be performed in accordance with the AVMA guidelines on euthanasia.”

“One must recognize that there is a great difference between euthanizing a beloved pet in a quiet room with people the pet knows and trusts and euthanizing animals that are feral or poorly socialized or that have lived with limited handling. There is also a big difference between highly trained doctors euthanizing individual pets and euthanizing large numbers of animals at one time, often with limited personnel who may also have limited training. These differences create many challenges that must be overcome if humane euthanasia is to be accomplished.”

“Today, the method of euthanasia in animal shelters across the United States has become quite controversial, and much of the rhetoric has an agenda to severely limit the method of euthanasia to lethal injection. Sadly, most proponents of this agenda perceive each animal sitting quietly while it receives an intravenous injection. This kind of thinking is quite naïve and will ultimately result in many animals dying with greater stress.”

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North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance



an animal welfare organization

*North Carolina's leading
voice for responsible
animal ownership*

Our Mission:

- Educate the public and provide resources and information about animal care and training
- Identify areas of need and assist communities and individuals in reaching sensible solutions to animal issues
- Support reasonable and humane animal welfare laws
- Oppose groups and those individuals that would restrict the rights of responsible animal owners.

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Understanding Shelter Euthanasia

A public service message from
North Carolina Responsible Animal
Owners Alliance (NCRAOA)



Separating . .

Fact from . .

Fiction

Gas is pumped in and the animals die slowly and painfully of suffocation.

FACT. They do not suffocate, they do not cry out "in pain". What they do is quickly lapse into unconsciousness as they do with sodium pentobarbital. Carbon monoxide is odorless and tasteless; in a properly designed chamber it results in unconsciousness in less than 12 seconds. There is no sensation of "gasping" for their last breath. Carbon monoxide binds with the hemoglobin on the red blood cells preventing transportation of oxygen to the brain and carbon dioxide away from the brain cells.

From the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia:
"Advantages-

- (1) Carbon monoxide induces loss of consciousness without pain and with minimal discernible discomfort.
- (2) Hypoxemia induced by CO is insidious, so that the animal appears to be unaware.
- (3) Death occurs rapidly if concentrations of 4 to 6% are used.

NC is one of only a small number of states in the US that still gasses dogs.

FACT. Only 17 states have passed legislation eliminating use of the gas chamber for euthanasia and requiring injection only. Carbon monoxide chambers are routinely used in shelters throughout the country.

Animals panic and try to claw their way out. They cry and howl.

FACT. Vocalization is not necessarily synonymous with pain. According to the AVMA guidelines on euthanasia as well as texts on anesthesia, once an animal is unconscious, it feels no pain. This is an important point because with carbon monoxide as well as lethal injection euthanasia, animals often vocalize even though they are unconscious. For the untrained person, this can be very disturbing.

Gas chambers are considered cruel and unusual punishment for people and should not be used for animals either.

FACT. The gas is not the same. Potassium cyanide (KCN) pellets with a quantity of concentrated sulfuric acid (H_2SO_4) generates the lethal gas, hydrogen cyanide (HCN), which is used in gas chambers for capital punishment.

Shelter workers are at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning.

FACT. Units can and should be inspected and air quality can be monitored to prevent unnecessary exposure. According to the EPA, no standards for CO have been agreed upon for indoor air. Even in our homes, average levels without gas stoves vary from 0.5 to 5 parts per million (ppm). Levels near poorly adjusted stoves may be 30 ppm or higher.

Euthanasia by injection is painless and far more humane.

FACT. A false assumption is that injection is painless. Needles hurt. Most activists think of cats and dogs in comparison to their beloved pets. These are NOT what make up the majority of animals euthanized. Most of the animals have little to no training or socialization, or are aggressive by nature, or are feral with no desire to be even close to, let alone handled by, any human. This often requires other control devices such as squeeze cages, gloves, catch poles, nets, dart guns, injectable sedatives to be administered just so the animal can be restrained for the lethal material to be administered. The level of anxiety and emotional stress for an animal fearful of being handled is actually much greater during the injection process than if the animal were calmly walked into a chamber.

All methods of euthanasia must be performed properly.

True. Euthanasia is in itself an unfortunate necessity. The methods of euthanasia, carbon monoxide, sodium pentobarbital, and gunshot in the field, are all accepted by the scientific community as humane, and are humane when properly applied. No method is more humane than another, especially in all situations. The goal must be to require proper training and inspection. Science, not human emotion, should determine how to bring a humane end to these unwanted animals.