

## Euthanasia

Everyone who goes into the backcountry with equines needs to know how to perform humane euthanasia should an unfortunate event occur and it becomes necessary.

There are 2 quick and humane methods – a pistol shot to the head or the severing the caudal rectal artery

### Pistol Shot

- If you do not wish to carry a firearm yourself, you should always ride with someone who will for many reasons.
  - Should you need to euthanize an animal with a firearm, pistols work best.
  - The anatomy of a horse does not place the brain “between the eyes” as in the western movies.
  - **NEVER attempt to shoot an animal in the heart** as you would if you were hunting. Many euthanasia’s go very badly this way and it is very distressing for all involved.
1. The preferred location is a frontal shot
    - a. Draw an “X” across the forehead crossing the left ear to the right eye and the right ear to the left eye.
    - b. Place the shot just slightly above the “X” aiming towards the neck.
  2. A second, less preferred location is to place the shot from the side, just below the ear hole aiming towards the opposite ear.
  3. A third, less preferred location is to place the shot behind the head just below the poll aiming towards the muzzle.

### Rectally

- If an animal is lying down and not thrashing about, you can humanely euthanize it without a firearm.
1. Insert your arm into the rectum with a sharp blade in your palm.
  2. Feel for the caudal rectal artery.
  3. It is located on the **spine side** of the rectal wall and should have a strong pulse.
  4. Cut the artery from side to side.
  5. This area doesn’t have a lot of nerves and shouldn’t be very painful.
  6. The animal will bleed out internally very quickly and without much stress.