



American Endurance Ride Conference

Guidelines for Performing a Field Necropsy

The American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC) is interested in acquiring as much information as possible when the unfortunate event of an equine fatality occurs. To aid in this, limited funding is provided for necropsy exams.

- If possible, the horse should be sent to a pathology lab for the necropsy. However, if due to the location of the ride and the difficulty in transporting the horse, a necropsy performed by the attending veterinarian may be necessary.
- Please use the attached form to aid in performing the necropsy and providing the data necessary to determine the cause of death.
- Prior to beginning the necropsy exam the appropriate area and disposal of the animal should be considered. Areas away from public view and an adequate way to dispose of the body should be determined. AERC understands this may not always be possible and therefore a necropsy may not be performed.

Field Necropsy:

- A systematic approach should be used beginning with the suspected area of interest.
 - ✓ If an obvious cause of death is identified, document this.
 - ✓ If a spinal cord injury is suspected referral to a facility that can remove the spinal column is recommended.
- Abdomen:
 - ✓ A curved flank incision from the tuber coxae to the xyphoid cartilage will allow adequate exposure of the abdomen and permit closure of the abdomen.
 - ✗ Identify the positioning of the GI tract.
 - ✗ Ante-mortem rupture of bowel will result in peritonitis and the presence of fibrin and fibrin tags on the bowel surface. If ingesta is identified in the GI tract without peritonitis this is likely post-mortem rupture.
 - ✗ Identify any intestinal compromise and cause (ie strangulation)
 - ✗ If no obvious cause is seen full thickness samples of small intestine, stomach, large intestine and cecum should be taken.
 - ✗ At least one kidney should be removed and submitted for histo. If renal failure or rhabdomyolysis is suspected then both kidneys should be examined and submitted.
- Thorax:
 - ✓ From the abdominal incision the chest cavity may be entered by removing the rib cage.
 - ✓ The presence of blood in the pleural space should be investigated for either aortic or pulmonary ruptures.
 - ✓ Submit lung and heart tissue for histo.
- Musculoskeletal:
 - ✓ If rhabdomyolysis is suspected or confirmed then the muscles can be examined for evidence of necrosis and samples submitted.
- Any other system that appeared to be involved.

These are only guidelines. All information that can be obtained will be helpful towards the efforts to educate riders and veterinarians as to the possible causes of deaths in endurance horses and possible preventative measures.

Notes

1. This form is to be completed when a field or in hospital necropsy is performed.
2. Please submit to the AERC office along with the fatality report. If tissues have been sent for histopathology this form may be returned prior to those results and the pathologists report forwarded when available.
3. This form may be used as a guideline for the necropsy information. Please include those areas of clinical relevance to the cause of death. If a definitive cause of death is not apparent please perform as thorough a necropsy evaluation as the conditions will allow.

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Gross Post-Mortem Examination Form

Identification

Owner Name _____ Animal Name _____ Age _____
Gender _____ Breed _____ Color _____ Markings _____
Brief History _____
Time of Death _____ Cause of Death _____ Euthanized (Y/N) _____

Gross Necropsy Findings

1. Musculoskeletal: External _____

Bones _____ Joints _____
Describe specific injuries if they were the cause of death _____

2. Respiratory System: Pharynx _____ Larynx _____

Trachea _____ Bronchi _____ Lungs _____

3. Circulatory System: Thoracic Fluid _____

Heart _____ Weight (if available) _____
Great Vessels _____ Vena Cava _____

4. Digestive System: Abdominal Cavity Fluid _____ Serosal Surface _____

Contents _____ Esophagus _____
Stomach _____ Small Intestine _____
Cecum _____ Large Colon _____
Small Colon _____ Specific Comments _____

5. Urogenital System: Urine (color) _____ Ureters _____

Urethra _____ Kidneys _____
Testicles _____ Ovaries _____

6. Nervous System: CNS (Brain)

Note gross findings if evaluated or clinical signs if brain case not opened _____
Pituitary _____
Spinal Cord (if evaluated, or clinical signs if suspected lesion site) _____

Gross Diagnosis _____

Tissues collected for histopathology _____

Laboratory _____ (attach pathologist's report)

* If an organ or system is not examined indicate with a N/E.

Veterinarian performing exam _____ Signature _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Phone Number _____ E-mail address _____