

# Equine Euthanasia for Colorado Veterinarians Survey 2009

Prepared by the Colorado Unwanted Horse Alliance

with

JRAM Enterprises

Colorado Veterinary Medical Association

Animal Assistance Foundation



**COLORADO**  
**UNWANTED HORSE ALLIANCE**

*Harnessing Energies to Find Solutions*

# Introduction

It is estimated that there are 170,000 unwanted horses in the United States every year.<sup>1</sup> As originally defined by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), unwanted horses are those that “are no longer wanted by their current owner because they are old, injured, sick, unmanageable, fail to meet the owner’s expectations (*e.g.*, performance, color or breeding), or their owner can no longer afford them”. Based on the national estimate, the number of unwanted horses in Colorado is thought to be approximately 6,200. Ideally, all of the unwanted horses could be sheltered and adopted to new owners by horse rescue organizations. Including annual turnover of capacity, the number of places for unwanted horses in rescues statewide is estimated to be 1,600.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the number of unwanted horses far exceeds the capacity of the horse rescues. Of the 1,600 horses placed in rescues, approximately 60% will be adopted by a member of the public and the rest will likely remain at the facility until end of life. Few options exist for owners who can no longer afford or no longer wishes to care for one of the 4,600 horses lacking space in a rescue: these options include adoption, sale, abandonment or humane euthanasia.

In 2008, the Colorado Unwanted Horse Alliance (CUHA) commissioned an environmental assessment study to determine the extent of the unwanted horse problem in Colorado. The survey and focus groups also obtained recommendations and suggestions from the horse community regarding effective solutions to address the increasing numbers of unwanted horses in the state. A recurring suggestion from the horse community was that an increase in access to humane euthanasia for healthy adoptable horses that were unwanted by their owner but could not be taken by a rescue could help address the issue. As a result of this recurring theme, CUHA wanted to establish the availability of humane euthanasia in Colorado. It was assumed that most horse owners would ask their local veterinarian to carry out the euthanasia. Therefore, a survey was designed to determine how many veterinarians performed horse euthanasia or were willing to perform horse euthanasia, and what their attitudes were to euthanizing a horse that was unwanted. The survey included 21 questions and was sent to 1,279 veterinarians in Colorado. It is estimated that 10% of these veterinarians practice equine medicine. CUHA received a total of 128 responses, 76 of which came from practitioners of equine medicine.

The results and key findings of the survey are presented. Discussion of some of the implications of the findings have been previously published.<sup>3, 4</sup>

# Key Findings

- Approximately half of the responding veterinarians had euthanized a horse during the past year, with the majority located in rural areas and in the western regions of the state (Figures 6-8).
- Thirteen percent of responding veterinarians experienced an increase in equine euthanasia, whereas 6% experienced a decrease (Figure 9). The increases occurred equally in the rural and suburban areas, and were highest in the South-East region of the state (Figures 11 and 12).
- The vast majority of equine euthanasia was performed by barbiturate overdose, with only 5% employing gunshot. No other methods were used by the participating veterinarians (Figure 13).
- Although its actual use is low, 61% of responding veterinarians would be willing to employ gunshot for equine euthanasia if requested by the horse's owner (Figure 14).
- Landfill and burial are the most frequently used methods of carcass disposal for euthanized horses (Figure 15).
- Greater than 90% of responding veterinarians charge below \$299 for equine euthanasia and carcass disposal fees for a total that is less than \$600 (Figures 16 and 17).
- Fourteen percent of the responding veterinarians had euthanized a horse for the owner's convenience during the past year (Figure 18). These veterinarians were located in suburban and rural areas of the North-West, South-West and South-East regions of the state (Figures 19 and 20). Of the veterinarians who had euthanized a horse for the owner's convenience, approximately half experienced an increase and half experienced a decrease compared to the previous year.
- Small animal and equine veterinarians have different attitudes toward equine euthanasia for an owner's convenience, with the latter being more willing to euthanize unwanted horses (Figures 25-27).
- Half of the responding veterinarians see horses in their practice that they consider to be unwanted (Figure 28). This increases to 77% among veterinarians that include equine care in their practice (Figure 29). Practices with the highest frequency of seeing unwanted horses are located in rural areas and the western part of the state (Figures 30 and 31).
- The top three reasons cited by responding veterinarians for horses to be unwanted were "cannot afford to keep," "old" and "injured" (Figure 32).
- The vast majority of responding veterinarians consider themselves to be very informed or somewhat informed on the issue of unwanted horses (Figures 33 and 34).

# Methods

A survey was developed to assess veterinarian views on the magnitude of the unwanted horse problem in Colorado and their attitudes toward implementing options to address the issue (Appendix I). The survey, hosted on Zoomerang, consisted of 21 questions designed for both equine and non-equine practitioners. An email soliciting anonymous participation was sent to 1,279 veterinarians in the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association database with email addresses. It is estimated that 130 of these, or approximately 10%, are either equine practitioners or mixed practice veterinarians that treat horses. The survey remained open for 12 days in April of 2009. Survey results were compiled and analyzed in the Zoomerang program. The results were filtered to account for type of practice (survey question 1); region of the state (question 2); and rural, urban or suburban location (question 3). Additional analyses were performed by cross-tabbing one question with another, and are indicated in the results.

# References

1. Unwanted Horse Coalition (2009) "2009 Unwanted Horse Survey – Creating Advocates for Responsible Ownership" Found at: [http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org/resources/UHC\\_Survey\\_07Jul09b.pdf](http://www.unwantedhorsecoalition.org/resources/UHC_Survey_07Jul09b.pdf)
2. Colorado Unwanted Horse Alliance (2008) "Colorado Unwanted Horse Environmental Assessment" Executive Summary Found at: <http://www.counwantedhorse.org/assessmentreport.pdf> (Contact the Colorado Unwanted Horse Alliance for the full report.)
3. Morris, KN and Montgomery, J (2009) "Colorado Vets Polled on Unwanted Horse, Euthanasia Issues" *The Horse* Found at: <http://www.thehorse.com/ViewArticle.aspx?ID=14158>
4. Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (2009) "Preliminary results of the "Equine Euthanasia for Colorado Veterinarians Survey" *CVMA eNews Digest*. Available from the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association.

# Results

## *Survey participants*

The first five questions (1-5) in the survey were designed to define the participating veterinarians.

## Types of responding veterinary practices

A total of 128 responses to the survey were recorded during the 12 days that it was open, for a response rate of 10%. Of the respondents, 76, or 59%, were veterinarians whose practices include equine care.

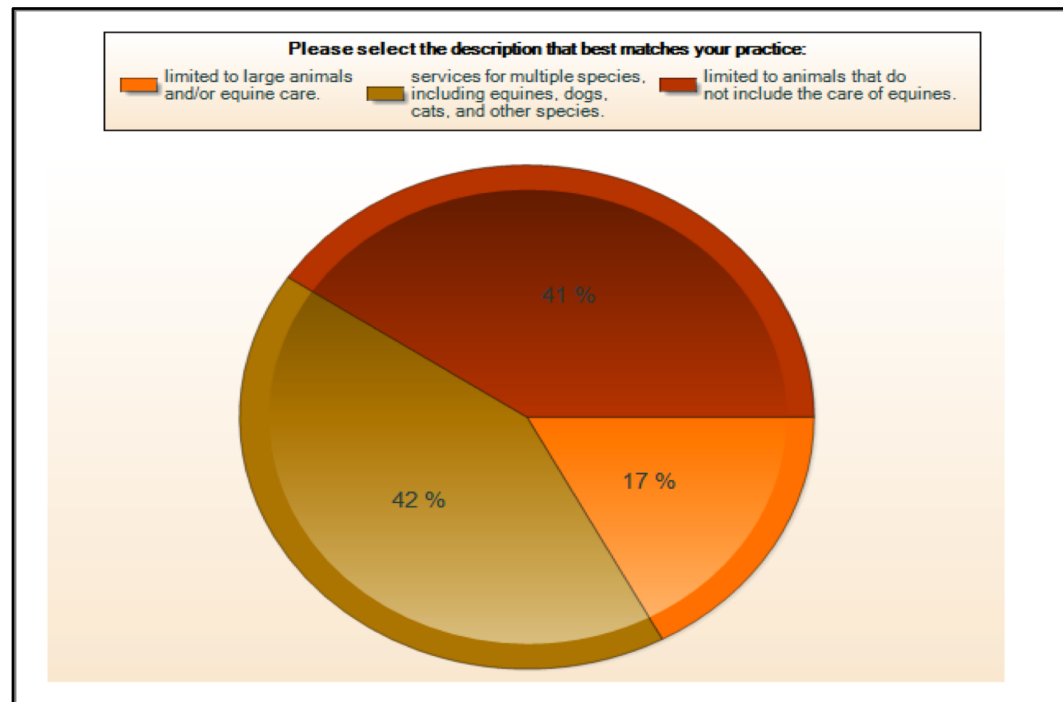


Figure 1. Results of the answers to survey question 1 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Geographic location of responding veterinary practices

Responses were received from all five regions of the state, with highest participation in the west (Figure 2).

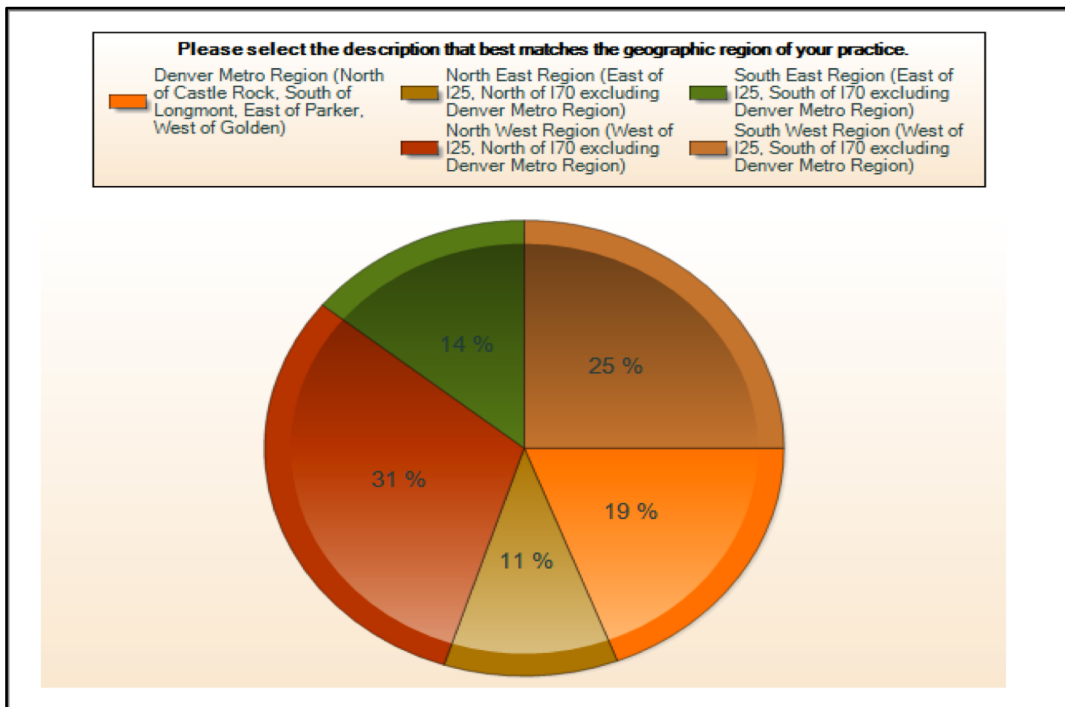


Figure 2. Results of the answers to survey question 2 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Location of responding veterinary practices

Sixty-two percent of the respondents' practices are located in urban or suburban locations (Figure 3). Of the 52 responding practices that do not include equine care, 43, or 77%, are located in either an urban or suburban location. In contrast, the 76 respondents that include equine care are almost evenly divided between urban/suburban and rural locations, with 47% in the former category and 53% in the latter (data not shown).

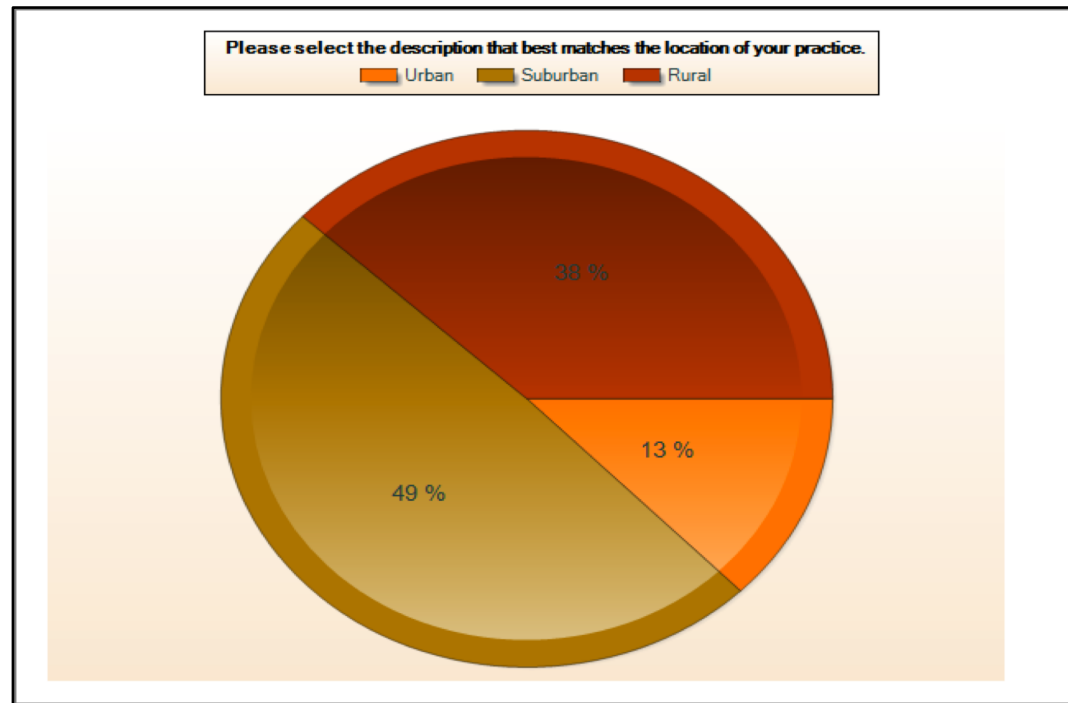


Figure 3. Results of the answers to survey question 3 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.





## Age distribution of responding veterinarians

There was a bell-shaped curve in the age distribution of the responding veterinarians, with 62% between the ages of 36 and 55 (Figure 4).

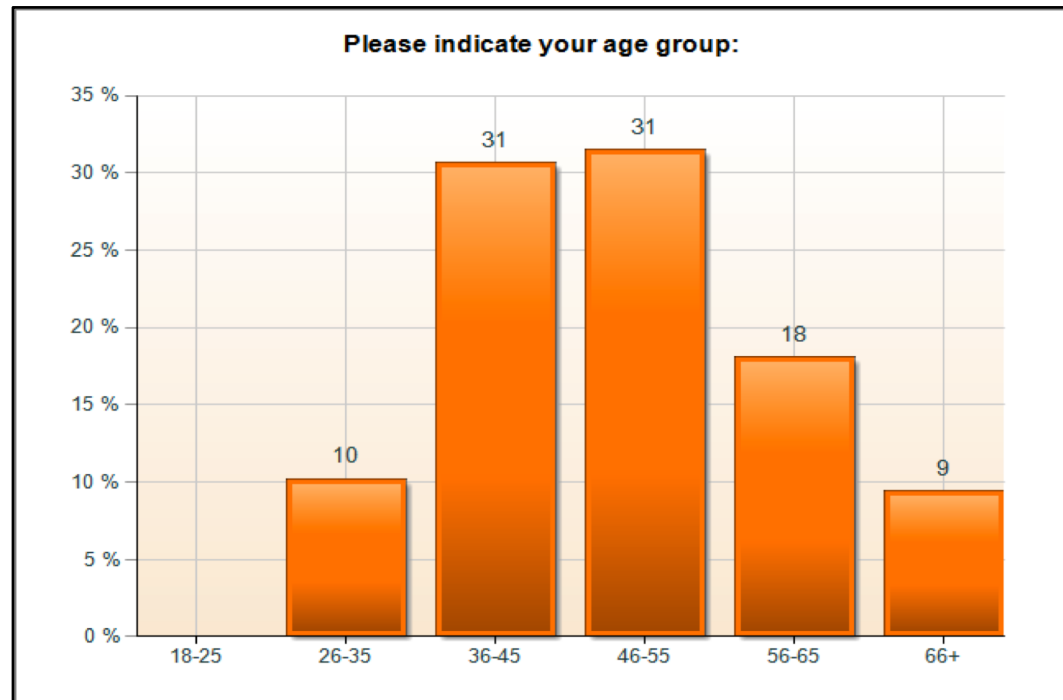


Figure 4. Results of the answers to survey question 4 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Gender of responding veterinarians

Slightly more of the responding veterinarians were female (57%) (Figure 5).

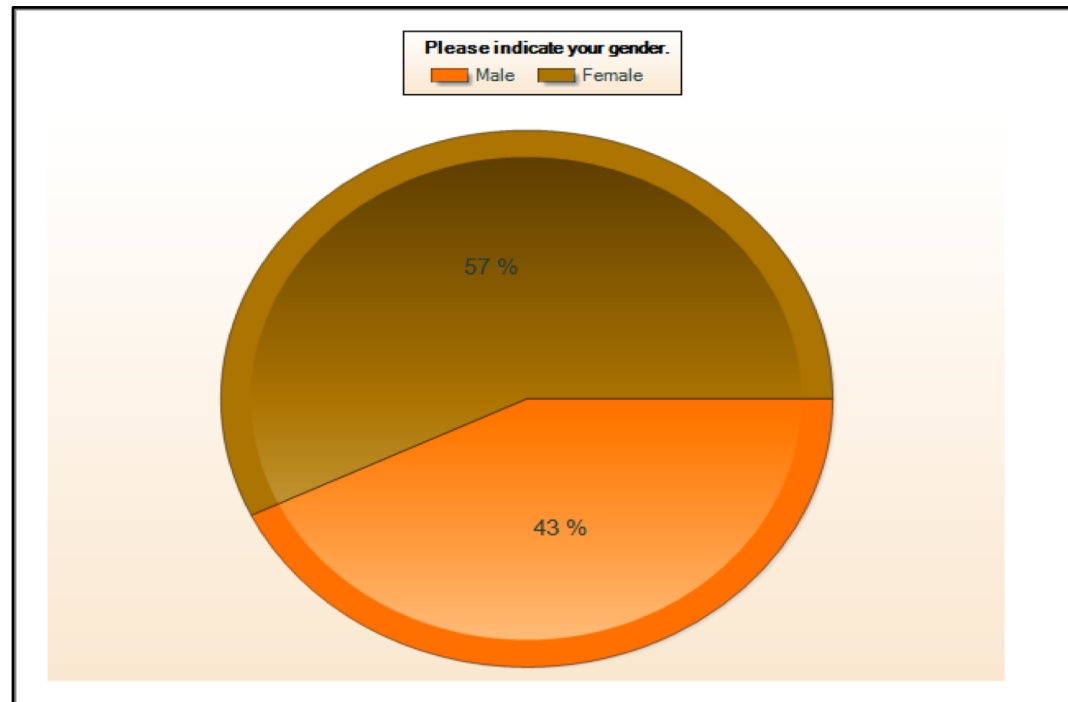


Figure 5. Results of the answers to survey question 5 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

# Results

## *Performance of horse euthanasia*

The next seven questions (6-12) in the survey sought to determine the prevalence and methods of horse euthanasia by veterinarians in Colorado.

## Horse euthanasia by responding veterinarians

Approximately half of the responding veterinarians had euthanized a horse during the past year (Figure 6).

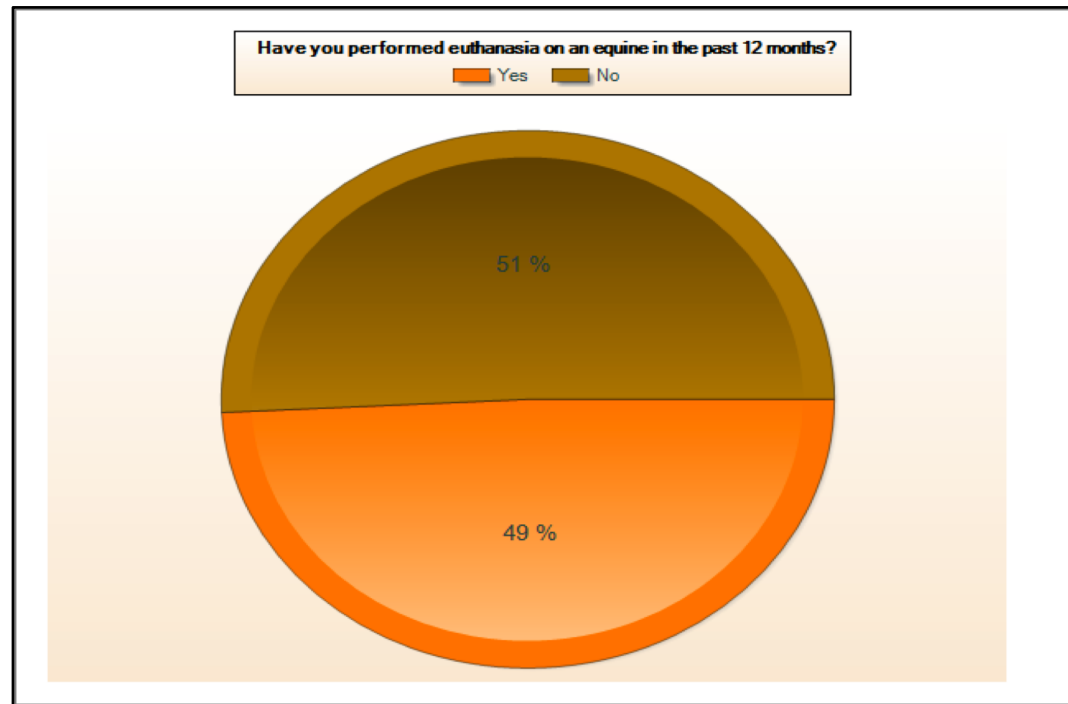


Figure 6. Results of the answers to survey question 6 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Location of veterinarians who performed a horse euthanasia

Of the 63 veterinarians who had performed an equine euthanasia, 62% were located in a rural location (Figure 7).

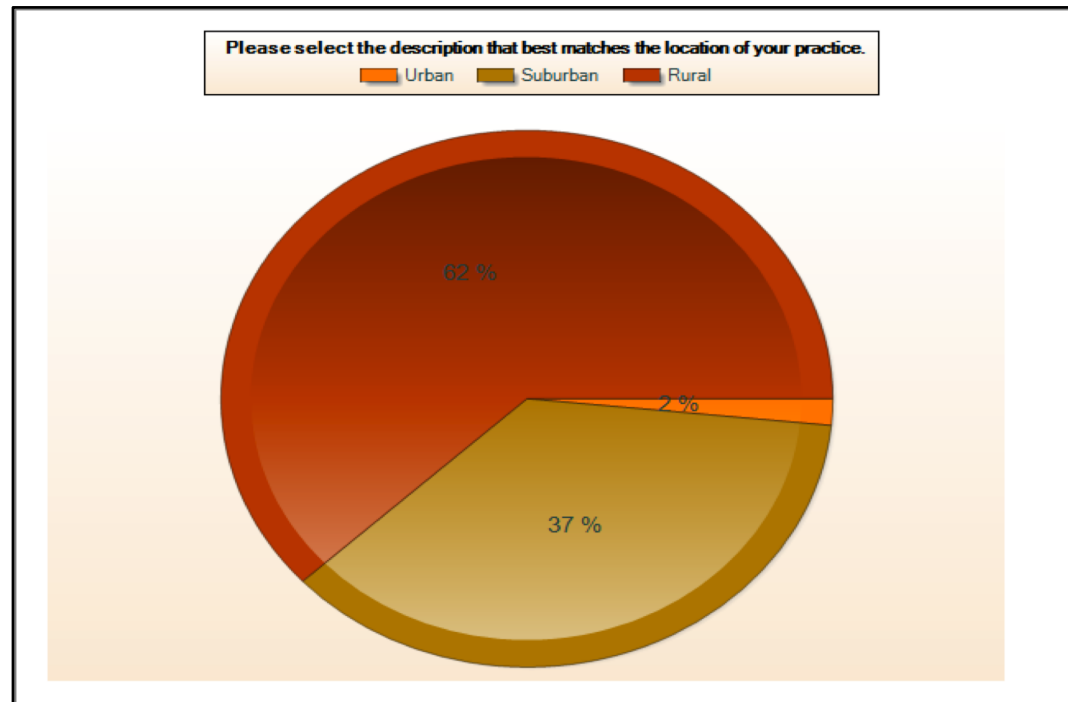


Figure 7. Results of the answers to survey question 3 (included in the title bar) with filtration of the data by a positive answer to question 6 to show the locations of veterinarians who had performed equine euthanasia in the past 12 months.

# Geographic locations of veterinarians who performed a horse euthanasia

Sixty percent of the veterinarians who had euthanized a horse were located in the western portions of the state (Figure 8).

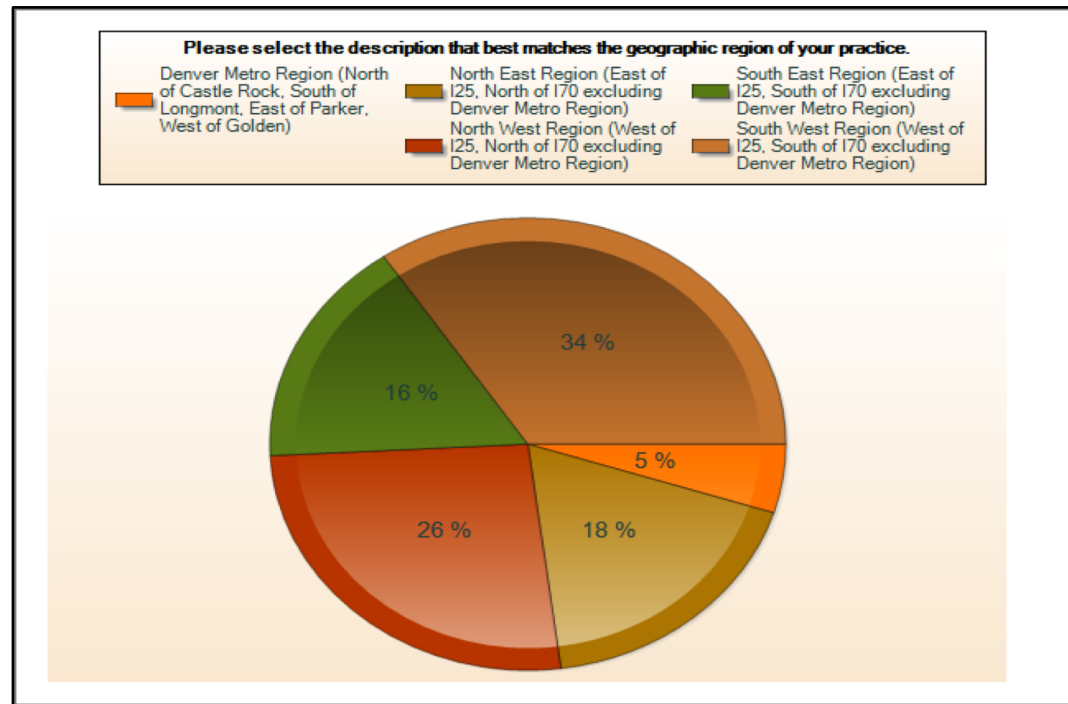


Figure 8. Results of the positive answers to survey question 6, indicating that the veterinarian had euthanized a horse within the past 12 months, with filtration of the data by geographic location of practice (included in the title bar).

## Dynamics of horse euthanasia compared to previous year

Thirteen percent of the participating veterinarians experienced an increase in the number of equine euthanasias performed by their practice (Figure 9).

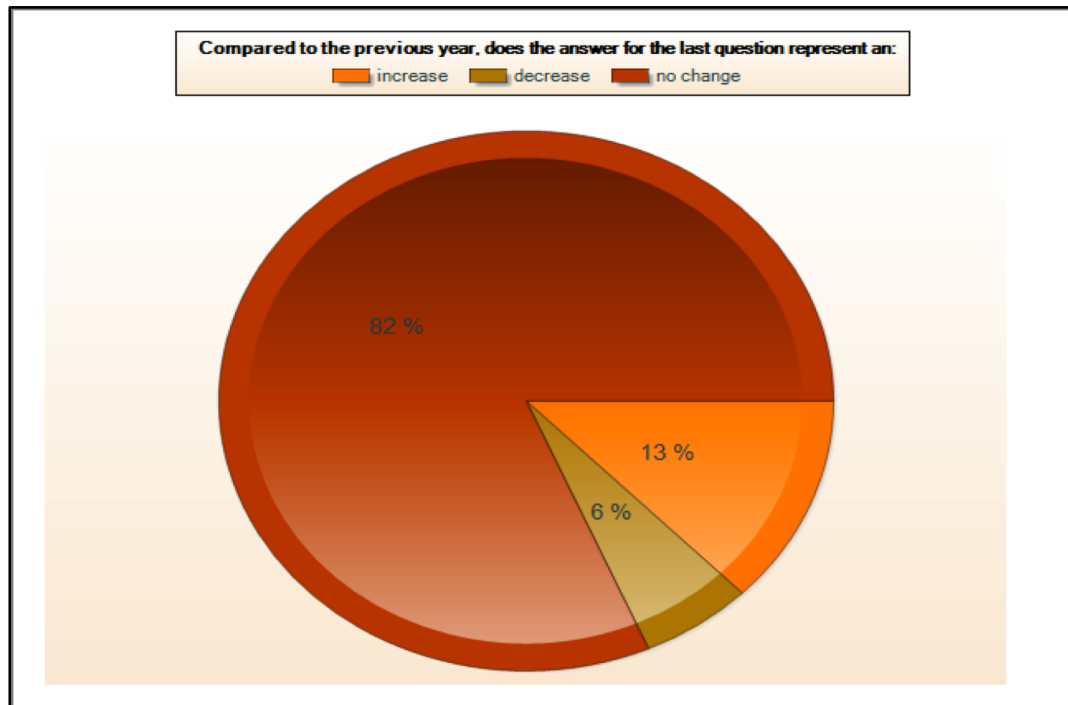


Figure 9. Results of the answers to survey question 7 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Veterinarians who experienced increases and decreases in horse euthanasia compared to previous year

Of the 62 veterinarians who had performed equine euthanasia in the previous 12 months, 15, or 24%, experienced an increase compared to the previous year, whereas 2, or 3%, experienced a decrease (Figure 10).

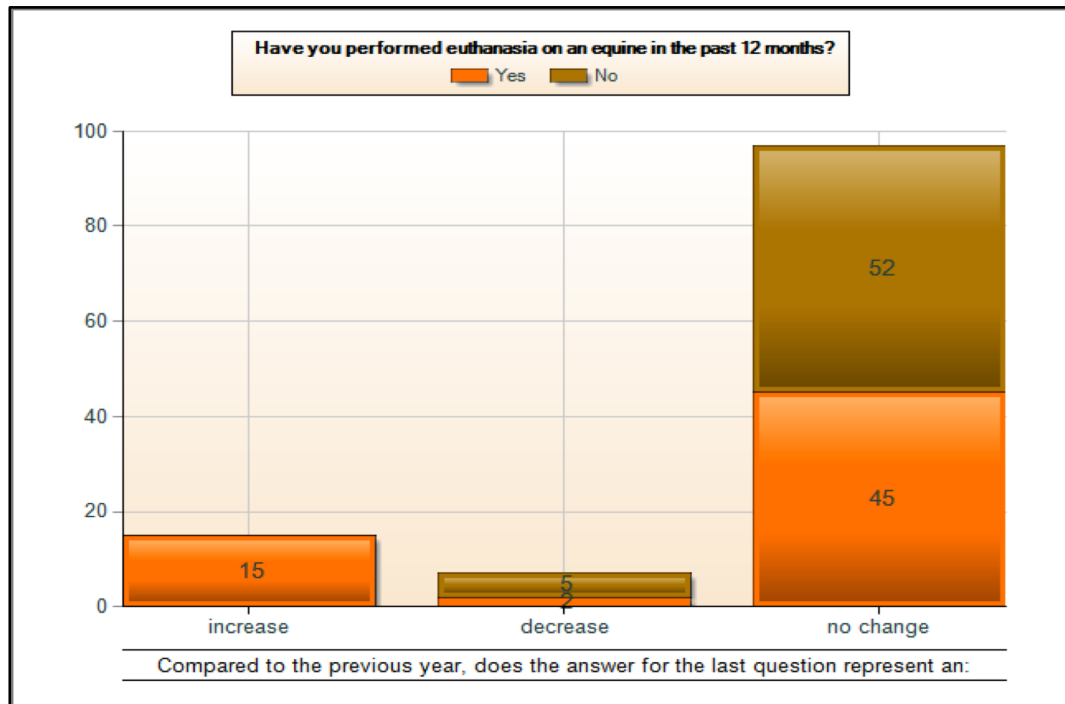


Figure 10. Results of cross-tab analysis of question 6 (included in the title bar) with question 7 (included below the x-axis) to determine the numbers of veterinarians who had performed equine euthanasia that saw an increase, decrease or no change compared to the previous year.



## Location of veterinarians who experienced increases and decreases in horse euthanasia compared to previous year

The increases in horse euthanasia by responding veterinarians occurred equally in the rural and suburban areas (Figure 11).

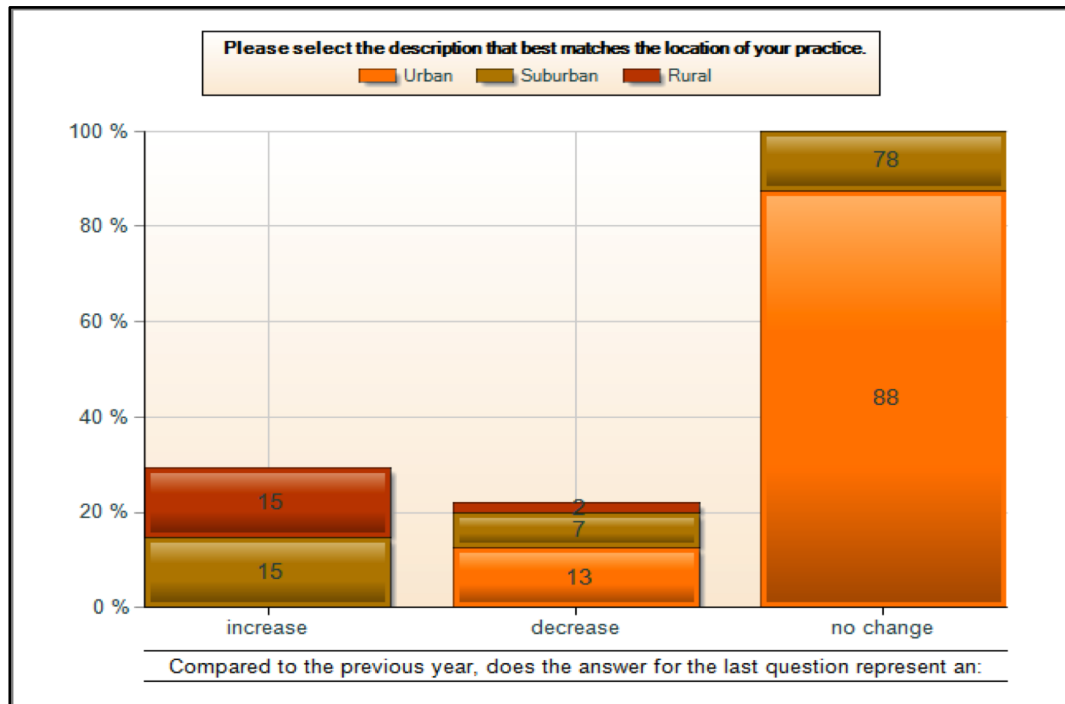


Figure 11. Results of cross-tab analysis of question 3 (included in the title bar) with question 7 (included below the x-axis) to determine the numbers of veterinarians who saw an increase compared to the previous year by location.

## Geographic location of veterinarians who experienced increases and decreases in horse euthanasia compared to previous year

The rise in veterinarians who experienced increases in equine euthanasia was greatest in the South-East, North-West and North-East regions of the state (Figure 12). Although the South-West region had the highest number of veterinarians who performed an equine euthanasia (Figure 8), there was very little perceived increase in that part of the state.

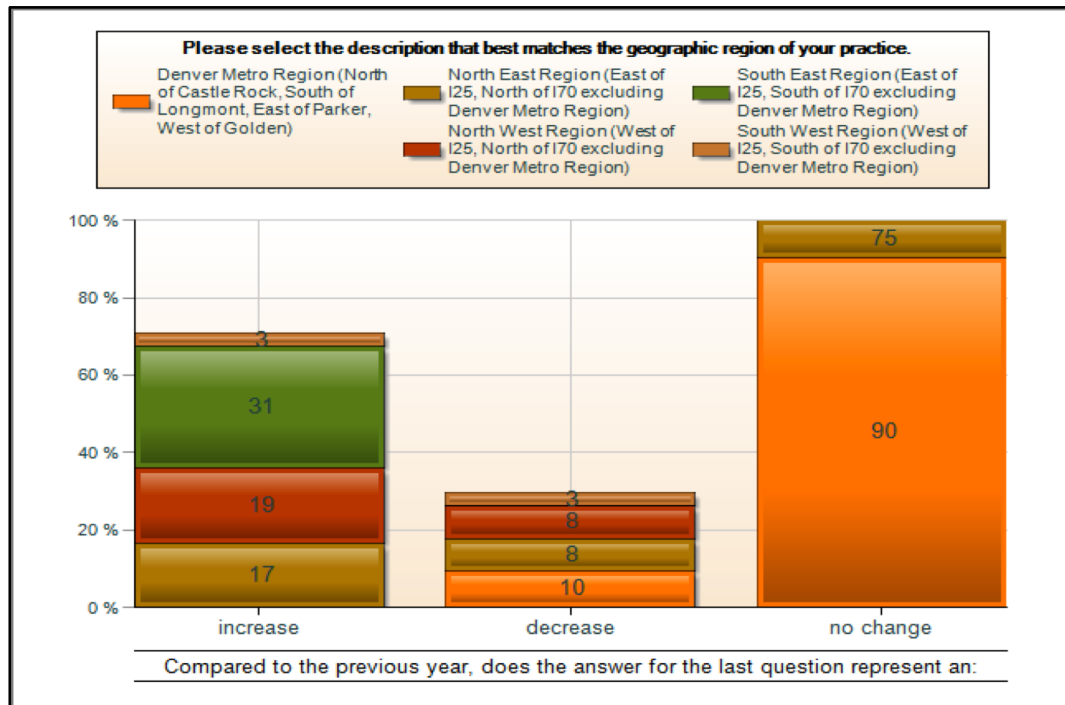


Figure 12. Results of cross-tab analysis of question 2 (included in the title bar) with question 7 (included below the x-axis) to determine the percentages of veterinarians who saw an increase compared to the previous year by geographic location.

## Methods of horse euthanasia used by responding veterinarians

Among the responding veterinarians, 95% of equine euthanasia was performed by barbiturate overdose and 5% by gunshot (Figure 13). None were performed using captive bolt or another method.

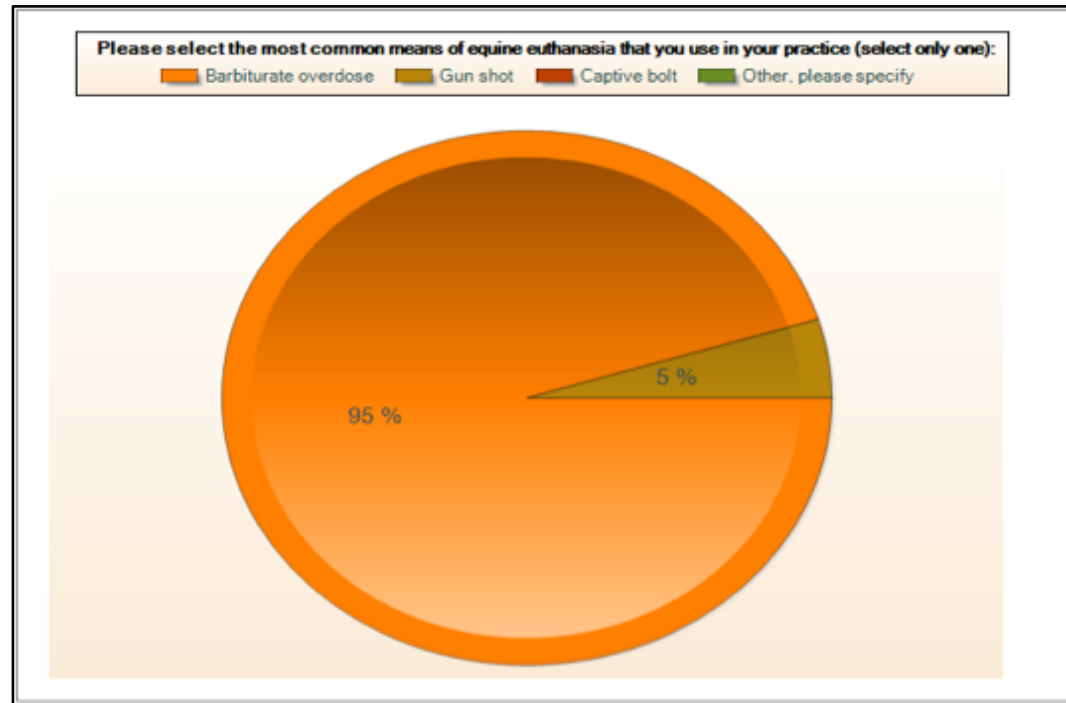


Figure 13. Results of the answers to survey question 8 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Willingness of responding veterinarians to euthanize a horse by gunshot if requested

Sixty-one percent of the responding veterinarians would be willing to use gunshot for equine euthanasia if requested by the horse's owner (Figure 14).

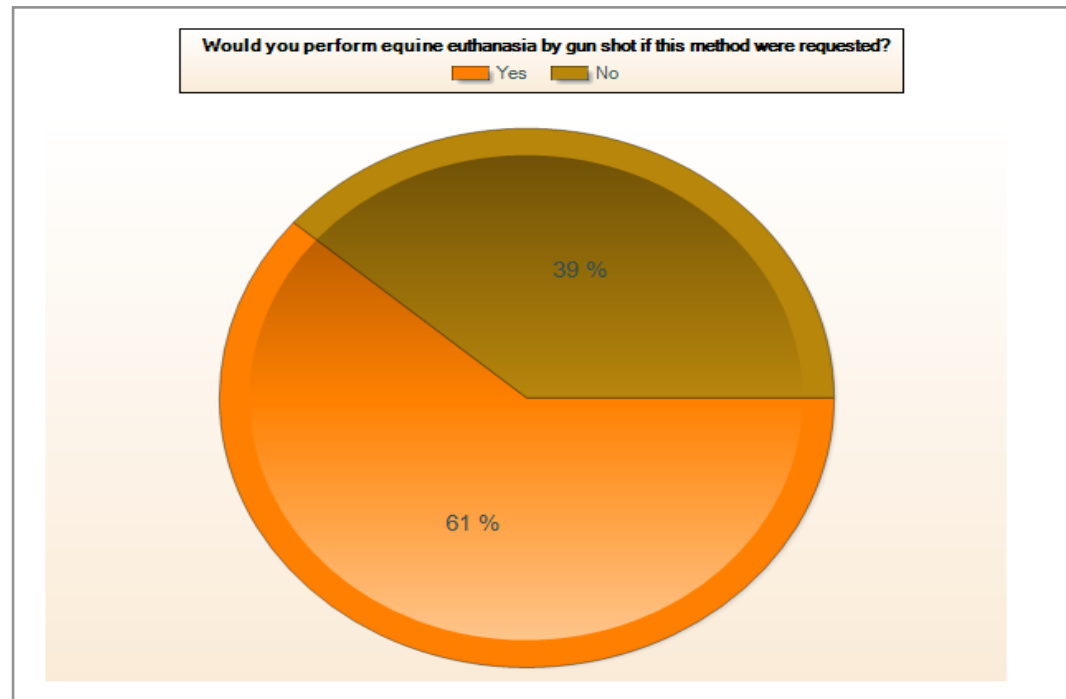


Figure 14. Results of the answers to survey question 9 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Methods of carcass disposal

The majority of euthanized horse carcasses are disposed of in landfills or by burial (Figure 15). Most of the 16% of veterinarians who responded “Other” use rendering to dispose of carcasses.

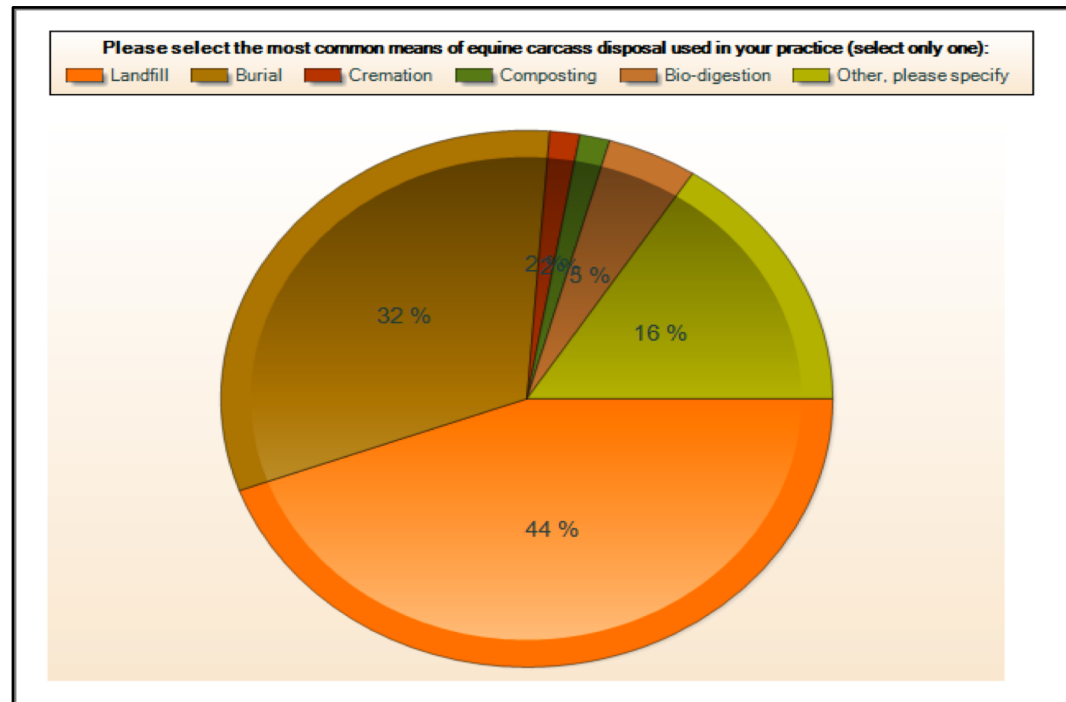


Figure 15. Results of the answers to survey question 10 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Horse euthanasia service fees

Only 2% of responding veterinarians charge more than \$299 for an equine euthanasia, with 69% charging below \$150 (Figure 16).

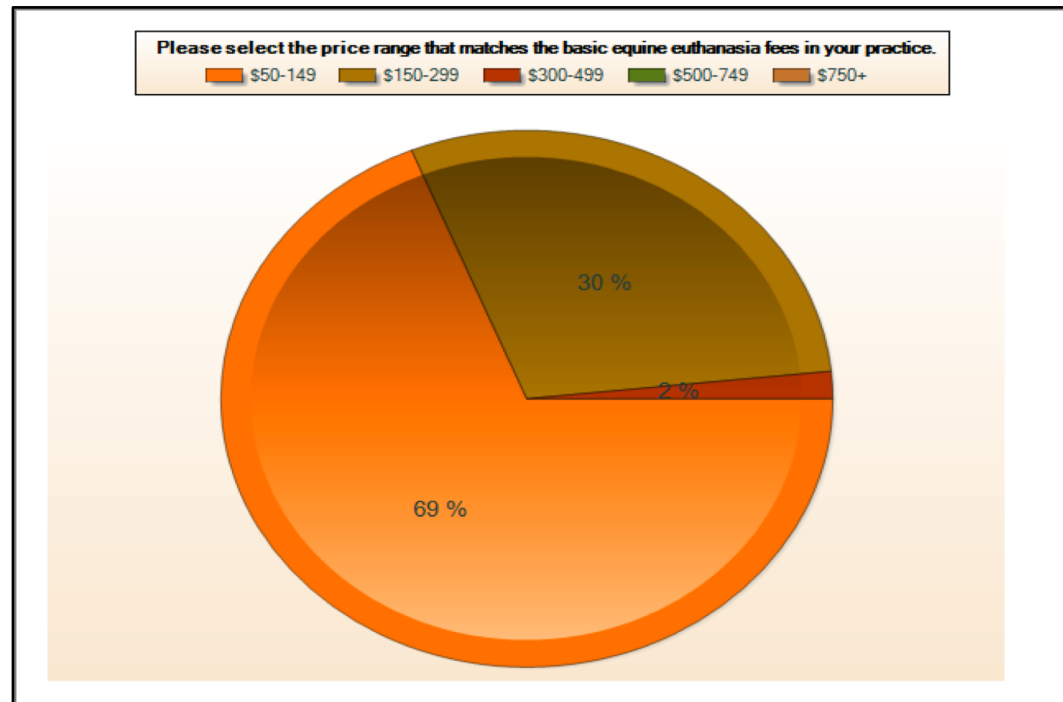


Figure 16. Results of the answers to survey question 11 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Carcass disposal fees

Only 7% of responding veterinarians charge more than \$299 for carcass disposal, with 42% charging below \$150 (Figure 17).

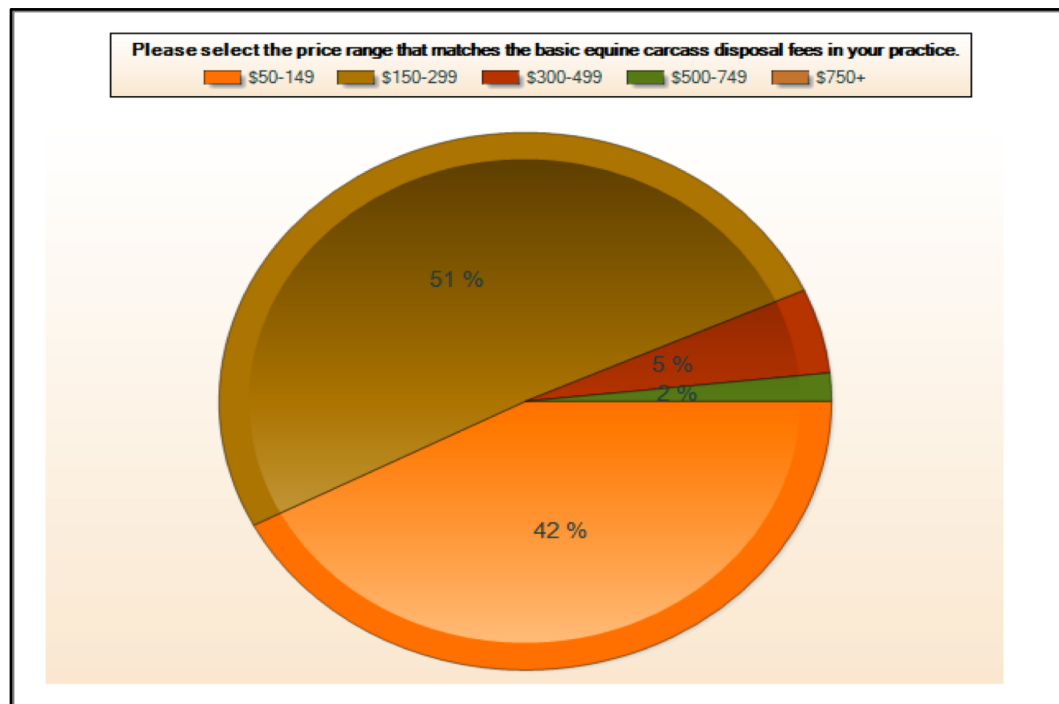


Figure 17. Results of the answers to survey question 12 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

# Results

## *Veterinarian attitudes toward euthanasia of unwanted horses*

The next five questions (13-17) in the survey sought to assess responding veterinarians' attitudes regarding humane euthanasia as an option for unwanted horses.



## Euthanasia of horses for owner convenience

Fourteen percent of the responding veterinarians had euthanized a horse for the owner's convenience during the past year (Figure 18).

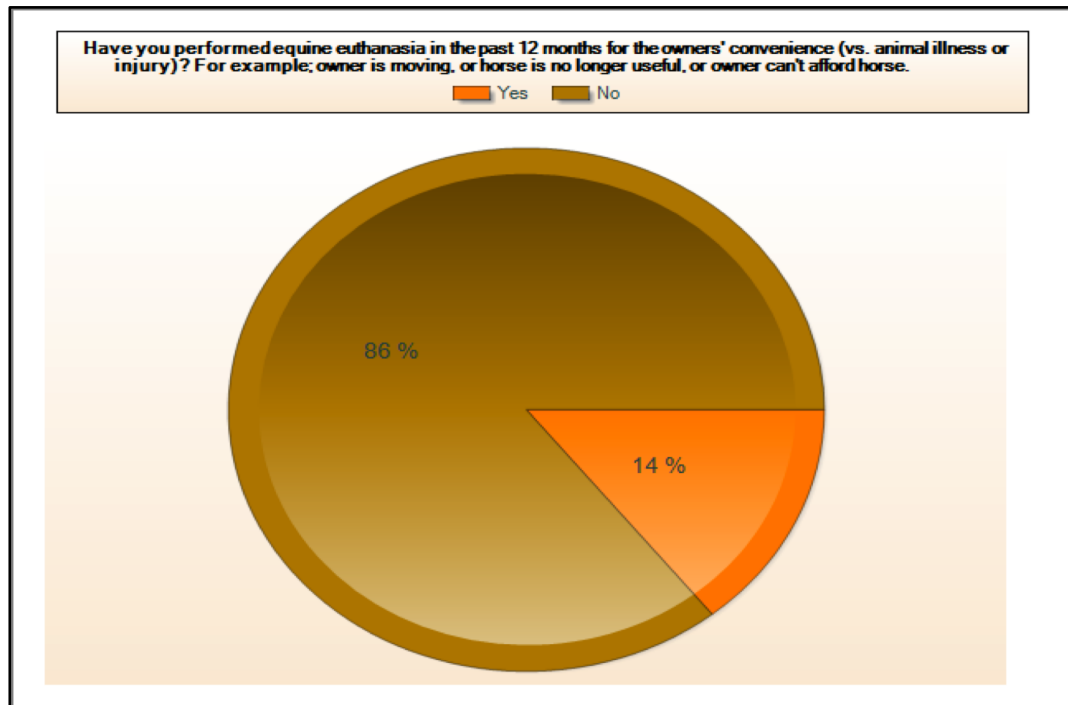


Figure 18. Results of the answers to survey question 13 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Location of euthanasia of horses for owner's convenience

The 17 veterinarians who had euthanized a horse for an owner's convenience during the past 12 months were located in both suburban and rural areas (Figure 19).

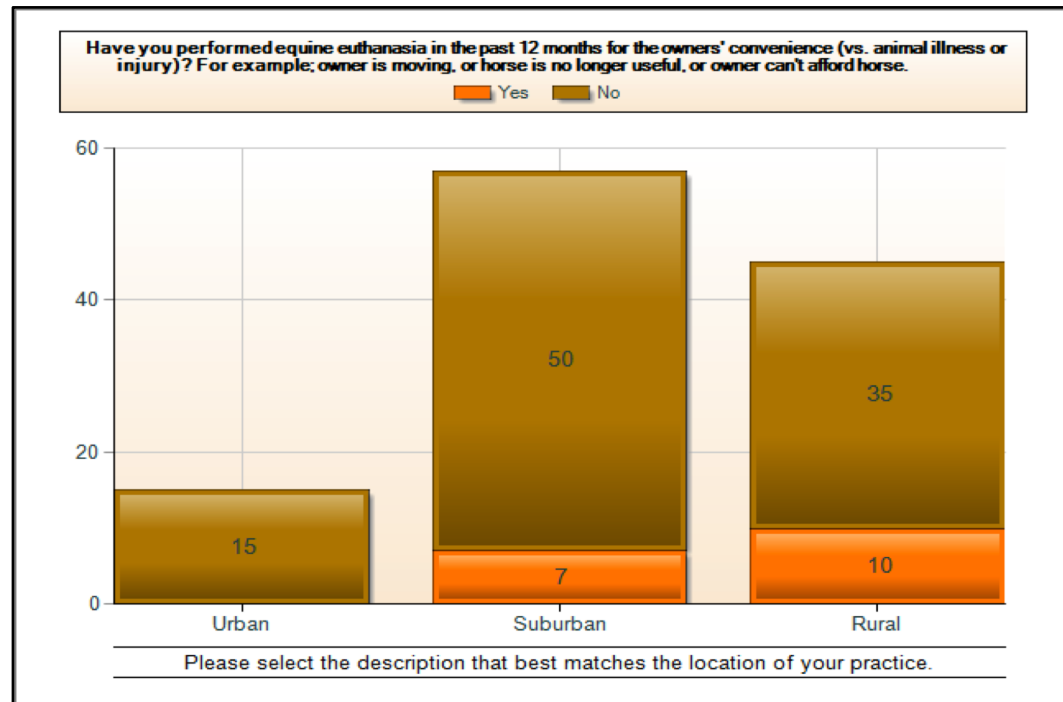


Figure 19. Results of cross-tab analysis of question 13 (included in the title bar) with question 3 (included below the x-axis) to determine the numbers of veterinarians who euthanized horses for an owner's convenience by location.

## Geographic location of euthanasia of horses for owner's convenience

The 17 veterinarians who had euthanized a horse for an owner's convenience during the past 12 months were located in the North-West, South-West and South-East regions of the state (Figure 20).

Note: Only 16 positive responses to question 13 were available for the cross-tabulation with question 2 because one respondent did not answer the latter.

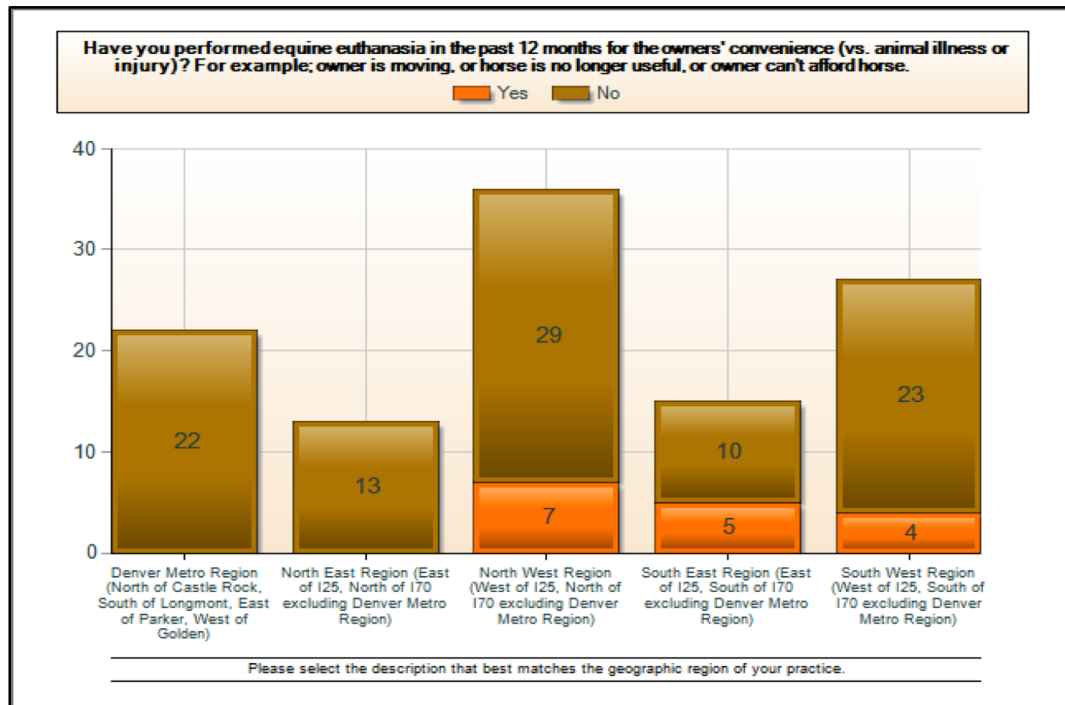


Figure 20. Results of cross-tab analysis of question 13 (included in the title bar) with question 2 (included below the x-axis) to determine the numbers of veterinarians who euthanized horses for an owner's convenience by region of the state.

## Dynamics of euthanasia of horses for owner convenience compared to previous year

Compared to the previous year, 8% of the participating veterinarians experienced an increase in equine euthanasia for an owner's convenience, while 1% experienced a decrease (Figure 21). Of the 17 veterinarians who had euthanized a horse for the owner's convenience, 8 experienced an increase, 8 experienced a decrease and 1 experienced no change compared to the previous year (data not shown).

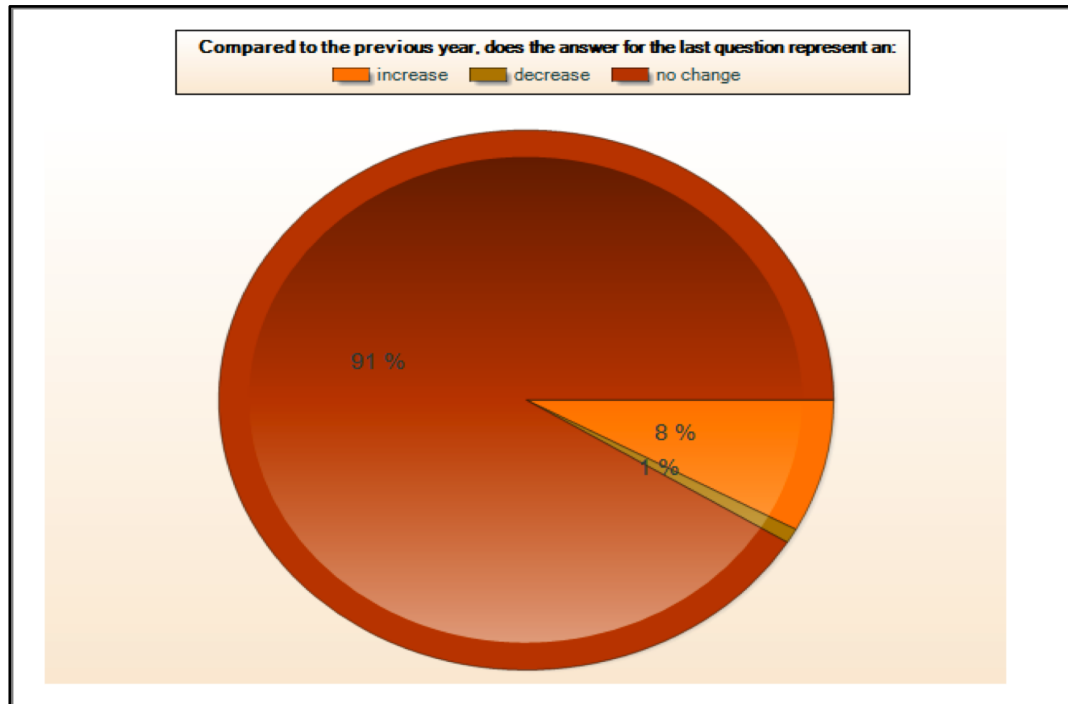


Figure 21. Results of the answers to survey question 14 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.



## Euthanasia of dogs and cats for owner convenience

Twenty-six percent of responding veterinarians had euthanized a dog or cat for an owner's convenience during the past 12 months (Figure 22).

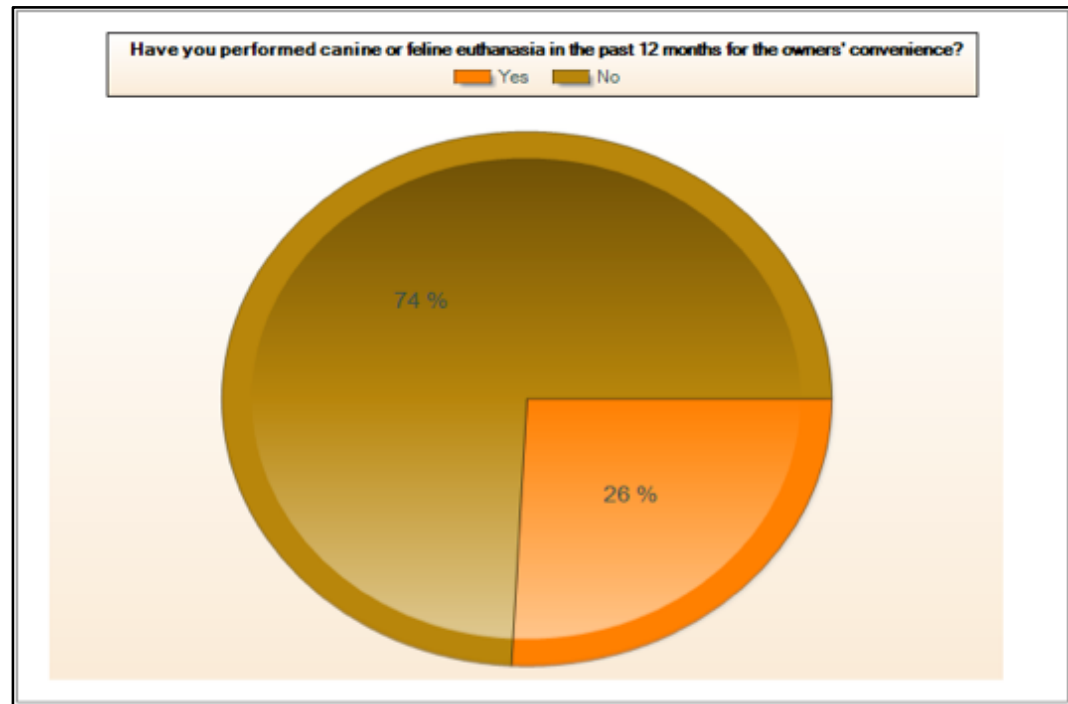


Figure 22. Results of the answers to survey question 15 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Euthanasia of dogs and cats for owner convenience by veterinarians whose practices do not include equine care

Twenty two percent of participating veterinarians whose practices do not include equine care had euthanized a dog or cat for the owner's convenience during the past 12 months (Figure 23).

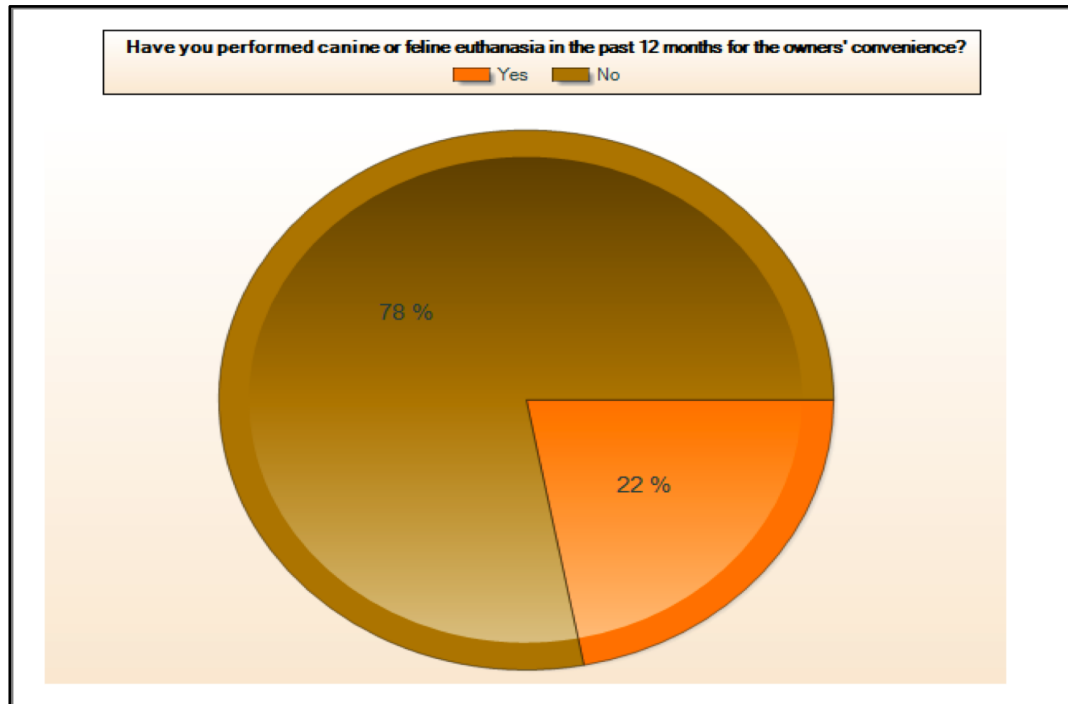


Figure 23. Results of the answers to survey question 15 (included in the title bar) with filtration of the data by veterinarians whose practices do not include equine care (question 1).

## Dynamics of euthanasia of dogs and cats for owner convenience compared to previous year

Five percent of the responding veterinarians experienced an increase in the euthanasia of dogs and cats for owner convenience compared to the previous year, while 3% experienced a decrease (Figure 24).

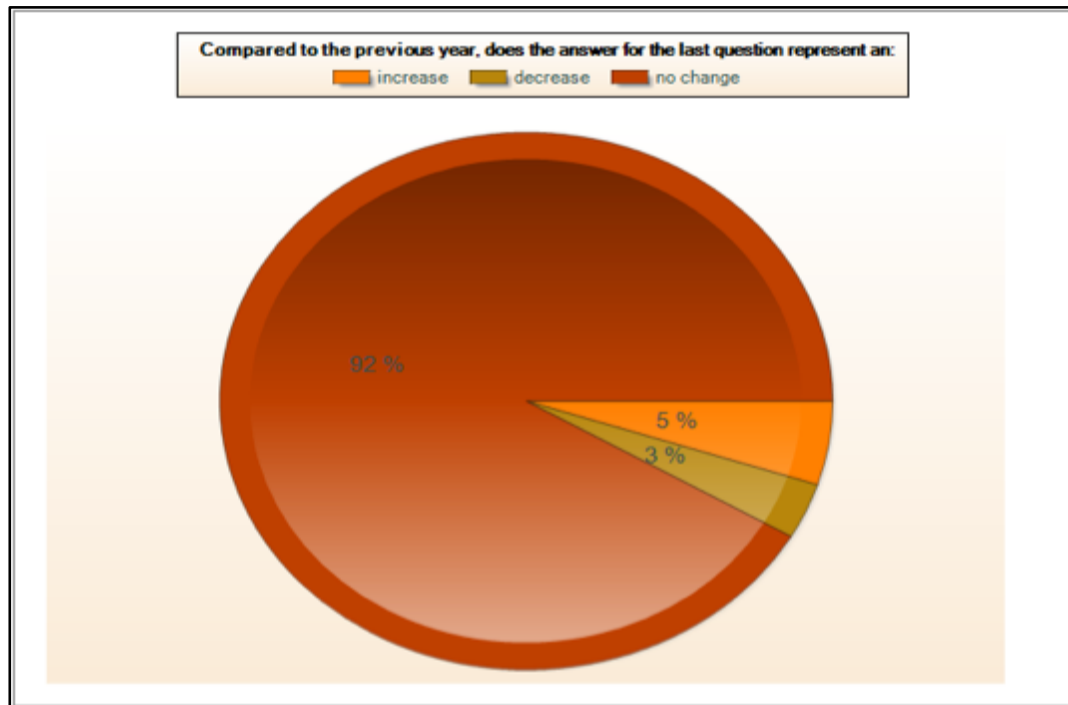


Figure 24. Results of the answers to survey question 16 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Veterinarian willingness to euthanize a horse for an owner's convenience

Thirty-one percent of the responding veterinarians are willing to euthanize a healthy horse for the owner's convenience (Figure 25).

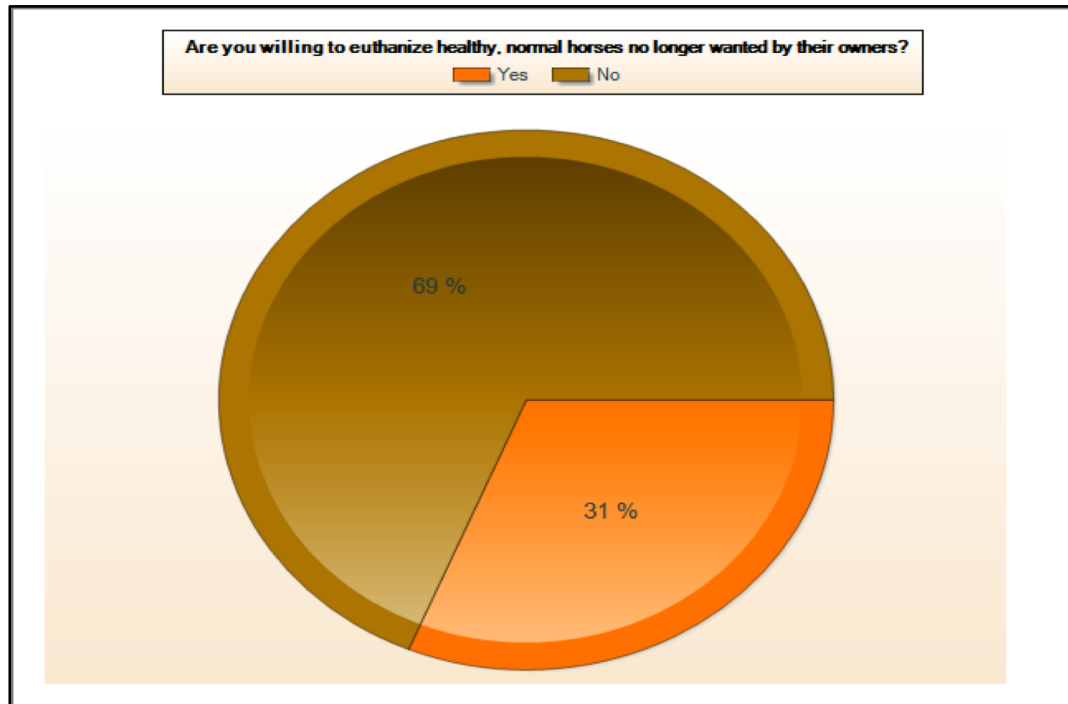


Figure 25. Results of the answers to survey question 17 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.



## Willingness of veterinarians whose practices include equine care to euthanize a horse for an owner's convenience

Forty-two percent of responding veterinarians whose practices include equine care would be willing to euthanize an unwanted horse (Figure 26).

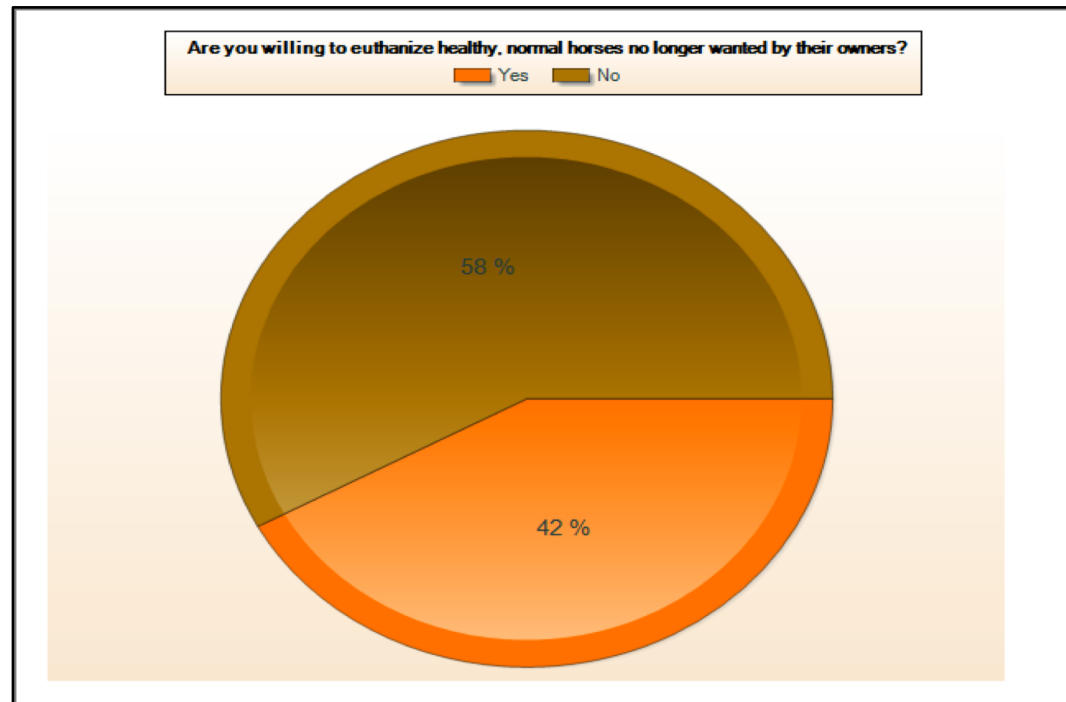


Figure 26. Results of the answers to survey question 17 (included in the title bar) with filtration of the data by veterinarians whose practices include equine care (question 1).

## Willingness of veterinarians whose practices don't include equine care to euthanize a horse for an owner's convenience

In contrast to their counterparts whose practices include equine care (Figure 26) and their willingness to euthanize a dog or cat for an owner's convenience (Figure 23), only 15% of small animal veterinarians would be willing to euthanize an unwanted horse (Figure 27).

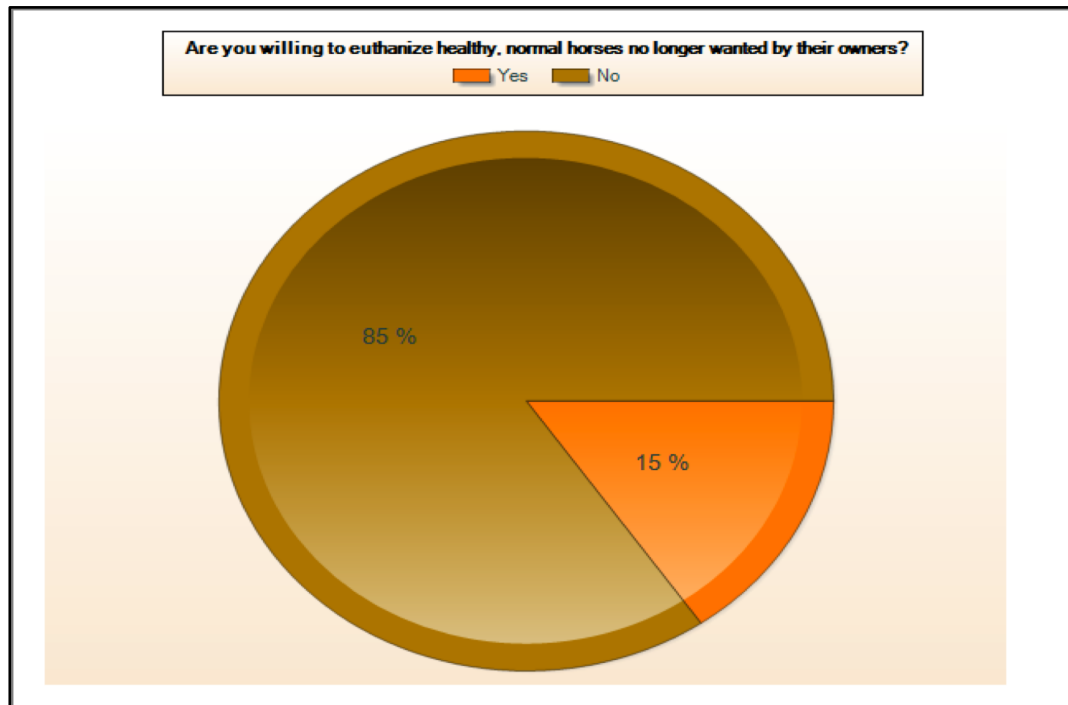


Figure 27. Results of the answers to survey question 17 (included in the title bar) with filtration of the data by veterinarians whose practices do not include equine care (question 1).

# Results

## *Veterinarian perceptions of the unwanted horse problem in Colorado*

The next four questions (18-21) were designed to assess veterinary perceptions of the unwanted horse problem in Colorado, and to solicit comments regarding the issue and equine euthanasia in general.

## Veterinarians who see unwanted horses in their practice

Half of the responding veterinarians see horses in their practice that they consider to be unwanted (Figure 28).

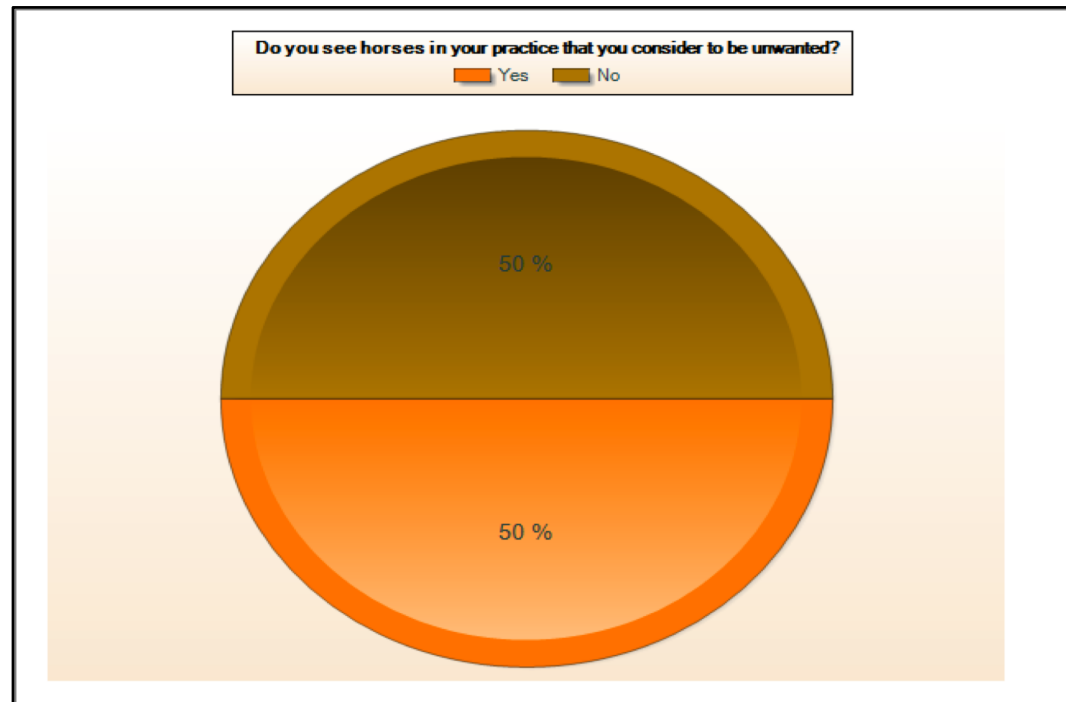


Figure 28. Results of the answers to survey question 18 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Equine veterinarians who see unwanted horses in their practice

The percentage of veterinarians who see unwanted horses in their practice increases to 77% among equine veterinarians (Figure 29).

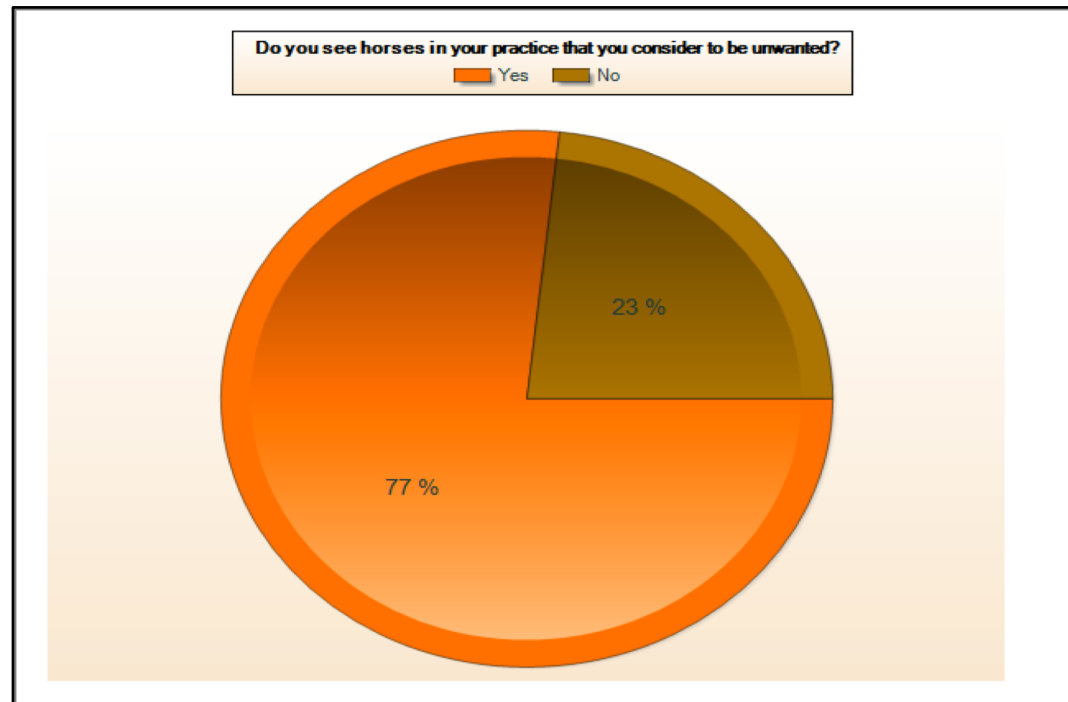


Figure 29. Results of the answers to survey question 18 (included in the title bar) with filtration of the data by veterinarians whose practices include equine care (question 1).

# Geographic location of veterinarians who see unwanted horses in their practice

Participating veterinarians with practices in rural locations most frequently see unwanted horses (Figure 30). This is also true by percentage of veterinarians (data not shown).

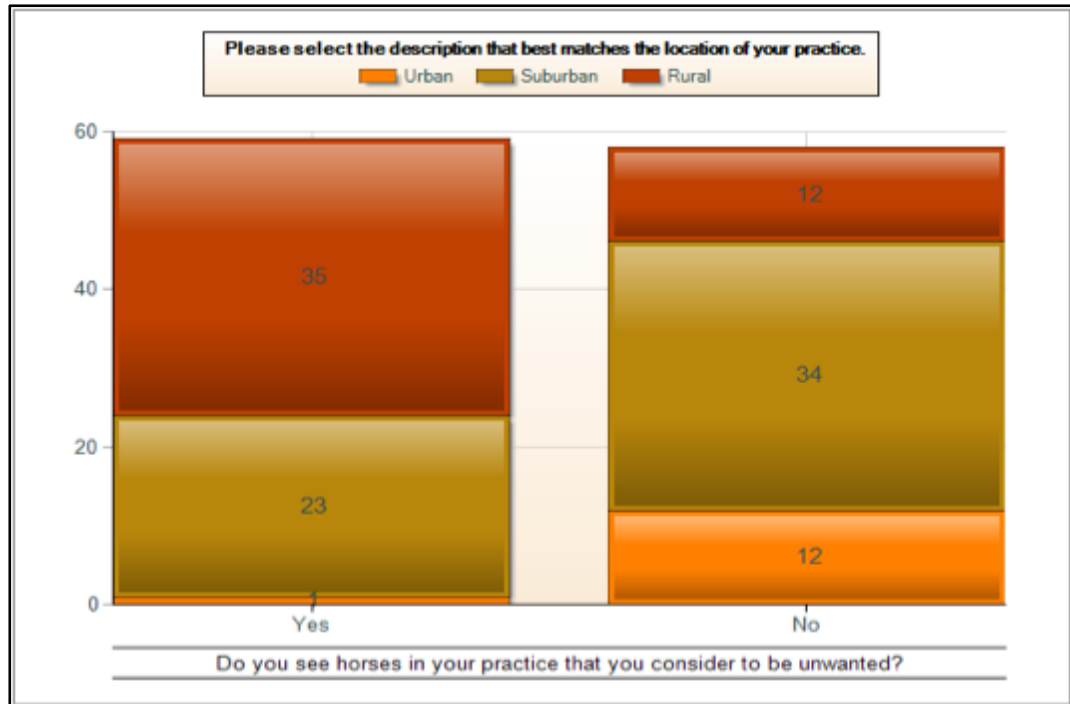


Figure 30. Results of cross-tab analysis of question 18 (included below the x-axis) with question 3 (included in the title bar) to determine the numbers of veterinarians who see unwanted horses in their practice by location.

# Geographic location of veterinarians who see unwanted horses in their practice

The highest numbers of veterinarians who see unwanted horses are in the South-West and North-West regions of the state, and the lowest number is in the Denver Metro region (Figure 31). By percentage of veterinarians in each region, the South-West (67%) and the North-East (62%) regions are the highest, with the North-West region fourth (43%) (data not shown).

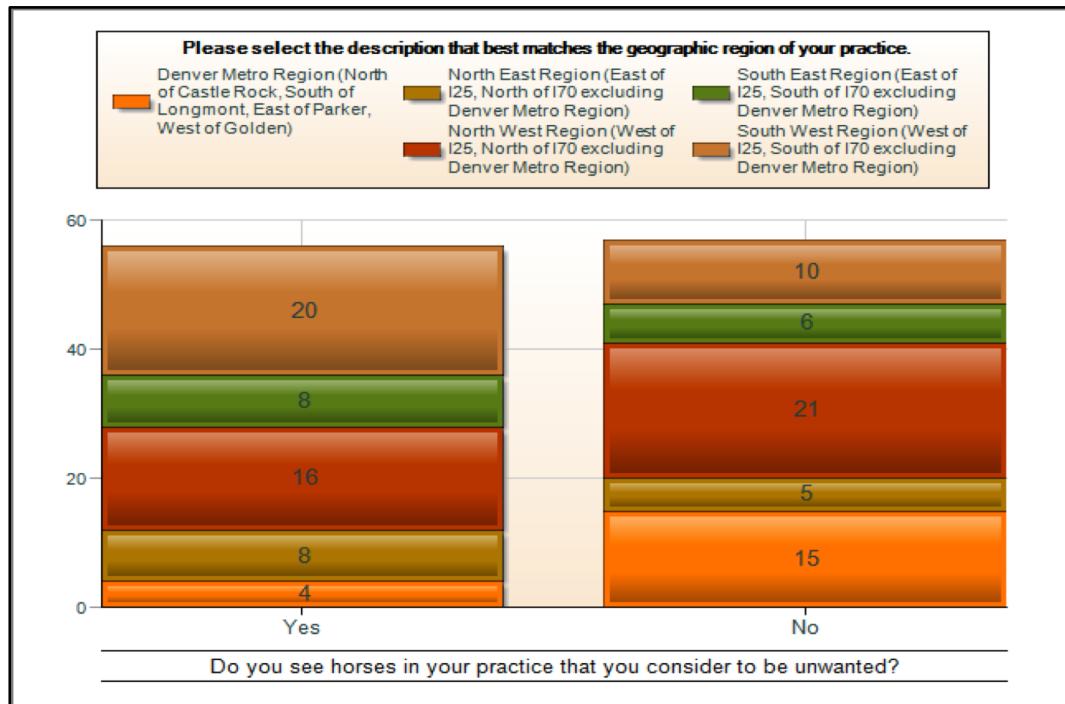


Figure 31. Results of cross-tab analysis of question 18 (included below the x-axis) with question 2 (included in the title bar) to determine the numbers of veterinarians who see unwanted horses in their practice by region of the state.

## Reasons perceived by veterinarians for horses to be unwanted

The top three reasons cited by participating veterinarians for horses to be unwanted were “cannot”, “old” and “injured” (Figure 32). These same categories were also ranked highest when the data was filtered by urban, suburban or rural location of the veterinary practices (data not shown).

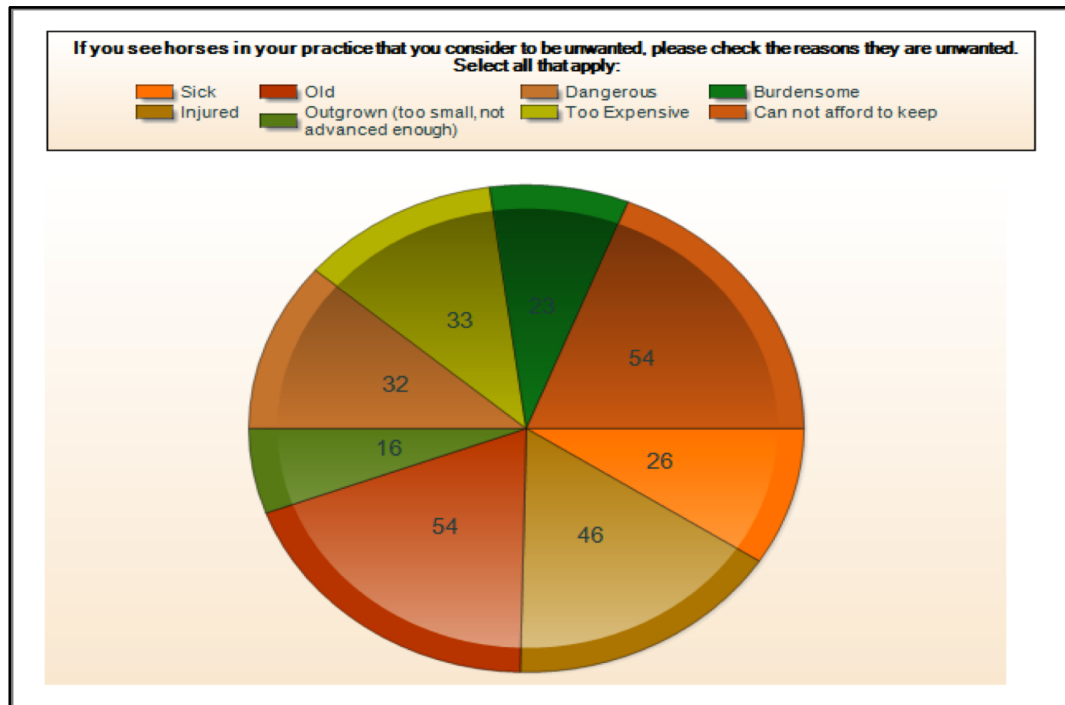


Figure 32. Results of the answers to survey question 19 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.



## Familiarity of veterinarians with the unwanted horse issue

Seventy-eight percent of the responding veterinarians consider themselves to be very informed or somewhat informed on the issue of unwanted horses (Figure 33).

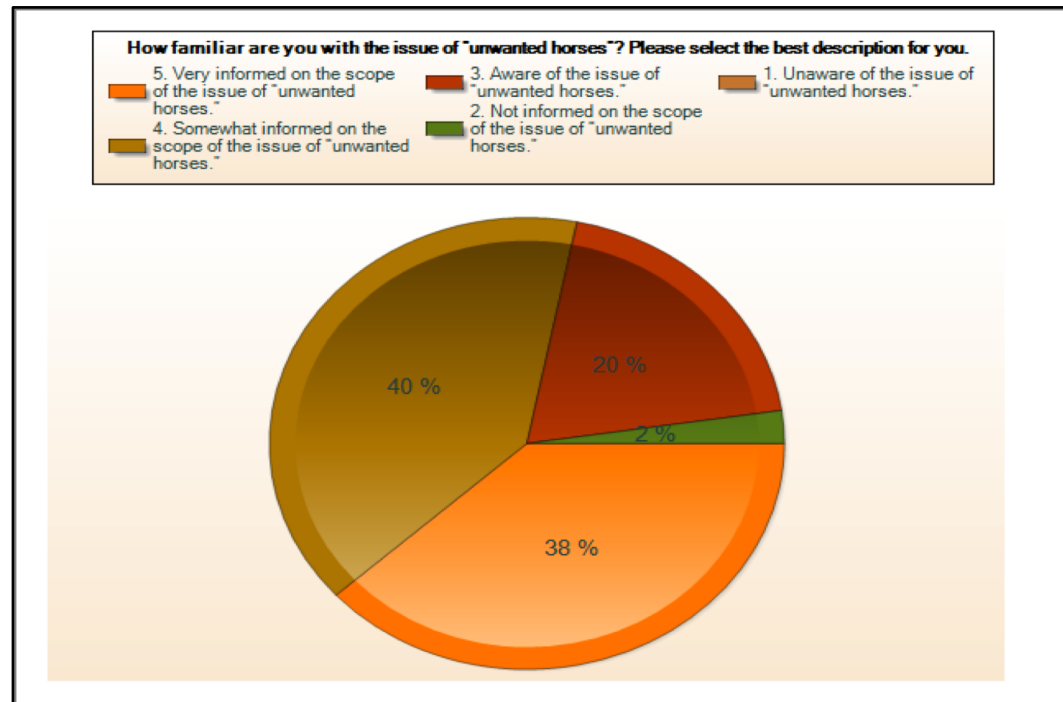


Figure 33. Results of the answers to survey question 20 (included in the title bar) with no filtration of the data.

## Familiarity of equine veterinarians with the unwanted horse issue

The percentage of veterinarians who consider themselves to be very informed or somewhat informed on the issue of unwanted horses increases to 83% among equine practitioners (Figure 34).

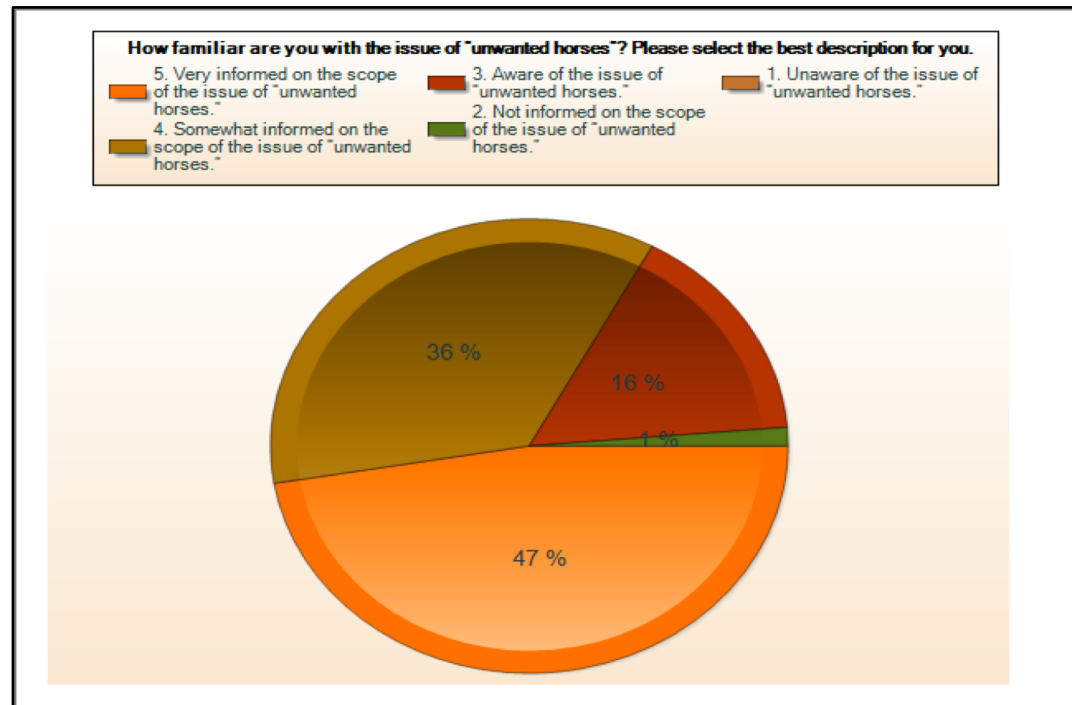


Figure 34. Results of the answers to survey question 20 (included in the title bar) with filtration of the data by veterinarians whose practices include equine care (question 1).

# Categorization of additional comments solicited in question 21 (some deleted as inappropriate)

## **Would Euthanize Horses**

- I still consider animals to be the property of their owners. If the owner wants the animal euth'd, I have no qualms about humanely doing the job. Better than to have the owner try to do it themselves.
- I would euthanize a healthy horse, esp if there were behavioral problems, but would assist the owner in re-homing if possible.
- We as a profession need to help by euthanasia when requested. We can not keep all of these horses in shelters.
- I will euthanize a healthy unwanted horse if the owner requests (insists) but we do make attempts to find a new home if it is a nice animal.

## **Would not Euthanize Horses**

- This is such a difficult issue. On the one hand I really understand that there are unwanted horses that are difficult to "re-home" and the costs associated with letting them live out their lives is extremely high. Release is not an option. While I don't know that I could be the one doing the euthanasia, I would support my equine colleagues in the practice of unwanted horse euthanasia if no alternative could be identified. I am very opposed to a disposable mentality and feel that the need for animal related education and reverence for life should be taught to school children. I would see unwanted horse euthanasia as a response to this current situation that we are in, but not as a long term strategy. IMO, the euthanasias should be performed with the greatest compassion and dignity to these majestic animals.
- I'm a shelter veterinarian and lifetime horse owner (currently a 30yr old horse and 21 yr old horse). I don't feel I could safely/humanely euthanize a fractious horse and a well run handling facility (designed by Temple Grandin) and slaughter is very humane.
- We do have clients that request convenience euthanasias, but we refuse to put them down. There is an increase in the number of people requesting this.
- I would only euthanize the horse if the horse was a danger to people and other animals, (still "healthy" and "normal"). Otherwise I would counsel the owner on sending the horse to auction or trying to sell it by other means. The Fence Post will run ads pro bono for those who cannot afford to pay for an ad to sell a healthy horse.
- an unwanted horse that is in someone's care should not be considered any different than an unwanted animal of another species and euthanasia should not be the alternative to working towards alternatives.

# Categorization of additional comments solicited in question 21 (some deleted as inappropriate)

## **In Favor of Slaughter Plants**

- The prohibition of equine slaughter has, in my opinion, exacerbated the problem of unwanted horses.
- I have never done a convenience euth of any kind! Check out NorCal Equine Rescue. The issue of horse slaughter to prevent horses starving to death comes to mind if it can be done humanely.
- I feel strongly that humane euthanasia and affordable disposition should be available for horses. I also feel strongly that humane slaughter should be available in this country in several locations.
- I would like to see packing plants made readily available to the equine industry
- Am aware that in many areas, horses are starving in record numbers. It's going to get worse in this economy. We need legal, as humane as possible, equine slaughterhouses now. Given that small animals are being dumped in increasing numbers, and humane societies are getting fewer donations, using the meet for rescue centers (small and wild), or pet food seems reasonable to me.
- I feel slaughter houses for horses are and should be a definite option. I am seeing more unwanted horses and I am seeing more inhumane treatment especially since the ban on slaughter came about.
- The U.S. needs to bring back the horse slaughter.
- In the rural regions of Northern Colorado, owners are shooting unwanted horses. There is a vast rural region where numerous reports of this is occurring. I would prefer that the "Horse" once again becomes an "animal" that can be slaughtered and this supply Europe's demands. Having worked in the state of Washington's equine slaughter house, it is a much kinder means of taking care of the unwanted/overpopulated equines in our nation.
- I am not an equine veterinarian (small animals only) but I am very involved with show horses as a hobby. I am definitely aware of the unwanted horse problem. I have seen 2 horses abandoned close to or at the boarding stable where my horse is kept. I do think that the slaughter ban is a problem and is increasing the problem of unwanted horses. It is my opinion that the welfare of horses will go down as unwanted horses are either taken out of the country for slaughter or neglected due to lack of owner commitment.
- Euthanasia is our only choice now, but slaughter would often be a better alternative.
- Equine slaughter is more humane than the situation we have now.
- We need to have humane slaughter for horses in the United States

# Categorization of additional comments solicited in question 21 (some deleted as inappropriate)

## **In Favor of Slaughter Plants (continued)**

- I have one of my own, with a chronic injury that euthanasia will be the probable outcome, but would rather send for rendering,
- As a small animal practitioner, I can't say that I have much to say specifically from an veterinary perspective. I do know, though, that there are limited resources to care for unwanted horses. I would like to see sick, injured, elderly horses used instead of warehoused. If the euthanasia process at a horse slaughter facility were designed well, I would rather see horses humanely euthanized than warehoused on limited food etc. In other words, I'm not opposed to the use of horses for food. I just think the euthanasia of these horses needs to be humane. Dr. Temple Grandin should be consulted for her opinion.
- In my opinion a huge part of the problem is lack of options for horse owners. This has been ramped up since the closing of horse slaughter operations in this country.

## **Euthanasia process comments**

- With regard to gun shot as a means of euthanasia, I would find it acceptable and useful only after I was trained to perform it correctly.
- disposal of our euthanized horses has been difficult, especially ones performed as country call
- Are there any studies ongoing concerning ground water contamination from euthanasia solutions leaching into water supplies?

## **Veterinary Fees**

- People are not calling the veterinarian for their unwanted horses. They are usually not willing to pay for care. They are letting them starve and just abandoning them.
- I euthanize horses for my food animal clients when they cannot afford the price quoted them by equine veterinarians, and the horse really does need to be euthanized.
- Neglect is a big problem. Many -esp. low income people will not pay for veterinary care.

# Categorization of additional comments solicited in question 21 (some deleted as inappropriate)

## General Observations

- I am a small animal shelter veterinarian, and this survey has inspired me to find out more about unwanted horses and whether or not there are enough rescues to respond to this problem adequately. Thank you for working on this issue.
- Unfortunately, the groups that are trying to save these horses many times have not had much experience with horses. It is an emotional knee jerk response. They many times don't consider what is truly humane and what constitutes humanization of these animals.
- I do believe that this is a serious issue, and I am glad that CVMA is active in the dialogue.
- I work with draft horses in particular and they are a group that has suffered in the face of the slaughter ban. There are many old horses that are no longer able to work that are flooding the market and keeping prices low for good quality horses. Draft horses consume a larger quantity of resources than a light horse, so in light of economic and environmental concerns (drought in some places), they have become a bigger burden than the "average" horse.
- Let's good a tax checkoff for the Unwanted Horse Fund
- The unwanted horse issue is one of ignorance. If people kept animals and had a use for them other than to look at them, those individuals would have a clue of what is involved with the care and cost of such an animal. This is an owner problem not to be passed on to the general public. When emotions lead logic the result, as has been with this issue, is the "unwanted horse."
- I practice in a rural area with more land available to keep "pet" horses that are not rideable.
- We are fortunate to have an equine "rescue" sanctuary about 30 miles from our clinic that is willing to work with owners of unwanted horses.

# Appendix I: survey questions

## **Equine Euthanasia Practices for Colorado Veterinarians**

Page 1 - Question 1 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets) [Mandatory]

Please select the description that best matches your practice:

limited to large animals and/or equine care.

services for multiple species, including equines, dogs, cats, and other species.

limited to animals that do not include the care of equines.

Page 1 - Question 2 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please select the description that best matches the geographic region of your practice.

Denver Metro Region (North of Castle Rock, South of Longmont, East of Parker, West of Golden)

North East Region (East of I25, North of I70 excluding Denver Metro Region)

North West Region (West of I25, North of I70 excluding Denver Metro Region)

South East Region (East of I25, South of I70 excluding Denver Metro Region)

South West Region (West of I25, South of I70 excluding Denver Metro Region)

Page 1 - Question 3 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please select the description that best matches the location of your practice.

Urban

Suburban

Rural

Page 1 - Question 4 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please indicate your age group:

18-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

56-65

66+



# Appendix I: survey questions

Page 1 - Question 5 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please indicate your gender.

Male

Female

Page 1 - Question 6 - Yes or No [Mandatory]

Have you performed euthanasia on an equine in the past 12 months?

Yes

No [Skip to 3]

Page 1 - Question 7 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Compared to the previous year, does the answer for the last question represent an:

increase

decrease

no change

Page 2 - Question 8 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please select the most common means of equine euthanasia that you use in your practice (select only one):

Barbiturate overdose

Gun shot

Captive bolt

Other, please specify

Page 2 - Question 9 - Yes or No

Would you perform equine euthanasia by gun shot if this method were requested?

Yes

No



# Appendix I: survey questions

Page 2 - Question 10 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please select the most common means of equine carcass disposal used in your practice (select only one):

Landfill

Burial

Cremation

Composting

Bio-digestion

Other, please specify

Page 2 - Question 11 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please select the price range that matches the basic equine euthanasia fees in your practice.

\$50-149

\$150-299

\$300-499

\$500-749

\$750+

Page 2 - Question 12 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Please select the price range that matches the basic equine carcass disposal fees in your practice.

\$50-149

\$150-299

\$300-499

\$500-749

\$750+

Page 3 - Question 13 - Yes or No

Have you performed equine euthanasia in the past 12 months for the owners' convenience (vs. animal illness or injury)?

For example; owner is moving, or horse is no longer useful, or owner can't afford horse.

Yes

No



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UNWANTED HORSE ALLIANCE

*Harnessing Energies to Find Solutions*

# Appendix I: survey questions

Page 3 - Question 14 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Compared to the previous year, does the answer for the last question represent an:

increase

decrease

no change

Page 3 - Question 15 - Yes or No

Have you performed canine or feline euthanasia in the past 12 months for the owners' convenience?

Yes

No

Page 3 - Question 16 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

Compared to the previous year, does the answer for the last question represent an:

increase

decrease

no change

Page 3 - Question 17 - Yes or No [Mandatory]

Are you willing to euthanize healthy, normal horses no longer wanted by their owners?

Yes

No

Page 3 - Question 18 - Yes or No

Do you see horses in your practice that you consider to be unwanted?

Yes

No

# Appendix I: survey questions

Page 3 - Question 19 - Choice - Multiple Answers (Bullets)

If you see horses in your practice that you consider to be unwanted, please check the reasons they are unwanted. Select all that apply:

Sick

Injured

Old

Outgrown (too small, not advanced enough)

Dangerous

Too Expensive

Burdensome

Can not afford to keep

Page 3 - Question 20 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

How familiar are you with the issue of “unwanted horses”? Please select the best description for you.

5. Very informed on the scope of the issue of “unwanted horses.”

4. Somewhat informed on the scope of the issue of “unwanted horses.”

3. Aware of the issue of “unwanted horses.”

2. Not informed on the scope of the issue of “unwanted horses.”

1. Unaware of the issue of “unwanted horses.”

Page 3 - Question 21 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please list any comments here that you would like to include with your responses.