



# AVMA Perspectives on Ending Lives of Wildlife Species

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ILAR Animal Welfare Challenges  
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# Background

## History of AVMA Euthanasia Guidelines

**Developed as guidance for U.S. veterinarians**

**1963 first edition**

- **Dogs, cats, small mammals**



Image courtesy of Etsy.com



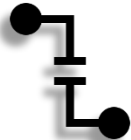
# Background

## History of AVMA Euthanasia Guidelines



### 2020 edition

- **Working groups + evidence-based emphasis**
  - **RZWG: biologists (TWS + AFWA), researchers, veterinarians**
  - **Free-ranging "Wildlife" in RZWG, avian, fish, invertebrate groups**
- **Context matters: split off Humane Slaughter and Depopulation**



# Background

## 2020 AVMA Euthanasia Guidelines

- **Context matters: NOT covered**
  - **Pest control**
  - **Hunting**
  - **Fishing**



# Challenges

## 2020 AVMA Euthanasia Guidelines

- **Dynamic polarized social environment**
- **Diversity of species and settings**
  - **Controlled vs. free-range settings**
- **Definition of euthanasia**
  - **“Good” death of an individual animal that minimizes pain and distress; humane**
  - **Communication/understanding of term**
  - **Real world application**
- **Tradition/biases/perceptions**



# 2020 AVMA POE

## Organization: new

- I. Introduction and General Comments
- II. Methods
- III. Methods of Euthanasia by Species and Environment

- Extensive
- Searchable PDF



# 2020 AVMA POE

## Organization

### I. Introduction and General Comments

#### I. Ethics

##### 1. Assumes justification

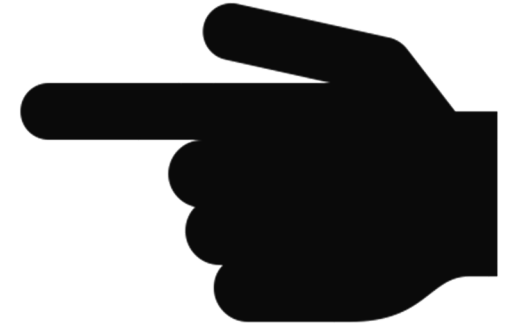
#### II. Criteria for method selection:

##### 1. Animal

##### 2. Human

##### 3. Environment

##### 4. Legal



# 2020 AVMA POE

## Organization

### I. Introduction and General Comments

### II. Methods

- **Animal experience: duration, consciousness, sedation vs. anesthesia...**
  - **Handling and environment: species variability**
- **Efficacy? Successful %, consistency, caveats, training,...**
- **Study design/practicality**
- **Support/statistics?**
- **Controlled drugs: extra-label=>VCPR, pharmaceutical grade, compounding,...**
- **Future: availability, legal, etc.**
- **Veterinary/biologist experience → reasonable recommendations**

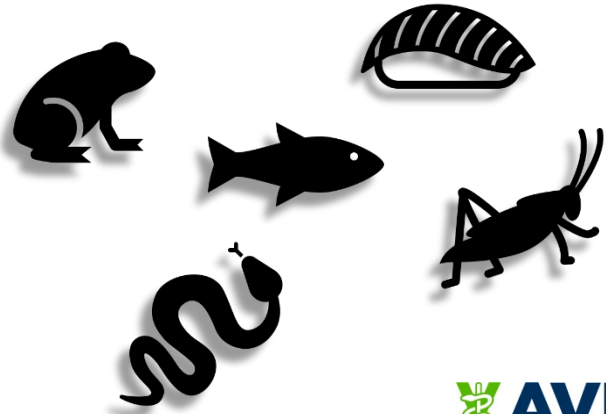
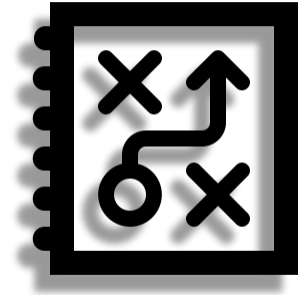




# 2020 AVMA POE

## Organization

- I. Introduction and General Comments
- II. Methods
- III. **Methods of Euthanasia by Species and Environment**
  1. Homeotherms – domestic and wild
  2. Poikilotherms
    1. Limited data
    2. Method/biological challenges
    3. Determination of death



# 2020 POE/Slaughter/Depop Challenges

## Terminology



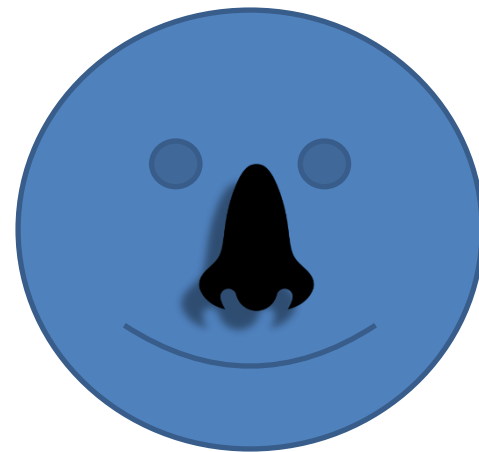
**What is the animal experiencing?**

**What is the best that we can do?**

# 2020 AVMA POE

## Challenges

- **Adaptability: ambiguity**
- **Requires thoughtful interpretation: Impossible to “cookbook”**
  - **Knowledge**
  - **Communication: IACUC/researcher/public**
  - **Disconnect from nature/biology**
- **Tradition/effective interpretation of POE**
  - **Tension: tradition vs. new options/expectations**
  - **“Sniff” test**



# 2020 AVMA POE


## Challenges

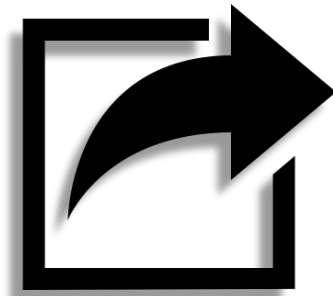
- **Evidence-based: limited literature**
  - How to balance/evaluate?
  - Distrust of “experts”
  - Polarized social environment → “Disinformation”
  - Litigation: “winning” vs. outcome-based focus
  - “Science” dependence to avoid value-based discussions
    - Need to accept tradeoffs



# 2020 AVMA POE

## Creative responses

- **New options**
  - **DeNicola, et al (2019. PlosOne): remote euthanasia of cervids**
  - **Gilbertson and Wyatt (2016. JAALA)  snail euthanasia**



# 2020 AVMA POE

## Take Home Points



- **Thoughtful consideration**
- **Context matters**

**THANK YOU**

