

# PRE-PLANNING AND PET AFTERCARE

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SUPPORT GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



Losing a pet is one of the most difficult things a person can experience. Whether the loss of a pet is sudden, or something you've anticipated for weeks or months, it's a highly emotional time.



**“THE VETERINARIAN SHOWED US WHAT OPTIONS WE HAD AND WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN. IT WAS NICE TO HAVE SOMEONE THERE TO HELP WITH THIS VERY HARD DECISION”**

**- JANET K.**



## HOW DO I KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME?

Your veterinarian is a good resource to help you know when it's time.

Several tools or techniques may provide more concrete answers to this subjective question.

- When your pet's health, mobility or comfort have been declining slowly, it may be helpful to view photos or videos of your pet from before the illness. Remember how your pet looked, behaved and interacted with you.
- Make a list of three to five things your pet likes to do, such as going for walks, playing with other pets, or enjoying their meals. When your pet is consistently unable to enjoy these things, it may be time to discuss euthanasia.
- Mark good and bad days on a calendar. This could be as simple as a happy or sad face for good or bad. As the bad days start to outnumber the good, it may be time to consider euthanasia.

Thinking about the end of your pet's life, and the choices around aftercare options may be better done in advance.



# EVALUATE YOUR PET'S QUALITY OF LIFE

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Determining the quality of life for a pet is often used to make end-of-life decisions. It's important to remember that each pet is an individual, and what constitutes a poor quality of life for one pet (such as lying around all day) may be normal for another. Although a pet's enjoyment of life depends on a variety of factors, physical symptoms — such as unrelenting pain or extreme difficulty breathing — should weigh heavily in the euthanasia decision. These factors constitute very poor quality of life, regardless of other factors.

As hard as it may be to consider end-of-life decisions, it is recommended that you start thinking about these issues early in the process, when your mind may be more clear. Decisions may seem forced or pressured if you wait until there is a crisis.





## EUTHANASIA – WHAT TO EXPECT

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If you are able to plan for your pet's final appointment, your veterinarian will explain what to expect if you have not experienced the loss of a pet before and will be able to answer any questions you may have.

You may be asked to read and fill out a euthanasia consent form, and your veterinarian may explain your aftercare options at this time. You will likely have the option to be present for the appointment or not - rest assured that your pet will receive compassionate care either way. If you choose to be present, your veterinarian will likely transfer you and your pet to a quiet environment for the appointment.

The euthanasia process involves two steps – first, your pet will be given a sedative to make him feel sleepy and reduce anxiety. Once your pet is relaxed, the veterinarian will administer a quick-acting euthanasia solution that will stop the heart from beating – rest assured that your pet will not be aware that this is happening and will not feel any pain or stress.

After the veterinarian has confirmed that your pet has passed away, you may choose to leave immediately or stay with your pet's body for your final goodbye.



## WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER MY PET IS EUTHANISED?

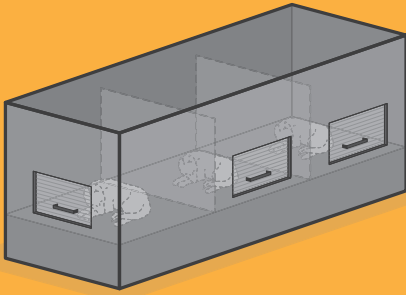
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Most people choose to have a pet cremated, unless they have an option for burial at home, or at a cemetery specifically for pets. Be sure to check any local regulations and by-laws about the burial of animals on residential property.

When a pet is cremated, you can choose to have the cremated remains (ashes) returned to you or not. Your veterinarian may talk to you about these different options:

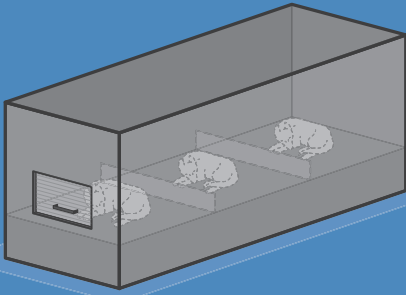
## WHAT IS CREMATION?

Just like with human cremation, flame-based pet cremation uses high heat to reduce a body to cremated remains, or what most people call 'ashes'.



## PRIVATE CREMATION

Only one pet is placed in each crematory chamber and cremated, with cremated remains (ashes) returned to the family.



## INDIVIDUAL CREMATION

More than one pet may be placed in the crematory with a physical separation from other pets. Location is documented and remains are removed one at a time and kept separate. The cremated remains (ashes) of a pet, and only that pet, are returned to the family.

The outcome of BOTH private cremation and individual cremation at a Gateway service provider is the same – a single pet's cremated remains are returned to the pet's family.

## COMMUNAL CREMATION

Pets are placed into the crematory together and cremated together. With a communal cremation, cremated remains are not returned to the family.



## WHAT'S RIGHT FOR ME?

Deciding what is best for your pet is a deeply personal choice, and you should consider your own circumstances, religious or spiritual beliefs or history with previous family pets.

## WHY CHOOSE A PRIVATE OR INDIVIDUAL CREMATION?

- I want to have her ashes so that I can scatter them somewhere that is meaningful to me.
- I want to have her physical remains in an urn where I can see it in my home.
- I want the option of creating a keepsake which incorporates his ashes – a piece of jewelry, glass keepsake or other memorial item.

**TIP:** If you think you may want a keepsake that requires cremated remains (ashes), – a piece of jewelry, a glass bead or other memorial item, a private or individual cremation is ideal.

**“I THINK IT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE THE ASHES TO BRING HOME, MAYBE BURY IN THE BACKYARD, PLANT A TREE, PUT A PLAQUE. I THINK IT WOULD HELP MY FAMILY HEAL AFTER THE LOSS ”**

**- JANINE M.**





## WHY CHOOSE A COMMUNAL CREMATION?

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- I want to remember her in my mind – I don't need her ashes with me.
- I have photos of him and that is enough for me.

**TIP:** Paw print impressions can be chosen with any cremation service type – you can choose to have a paw print memorial with a communal cremation.



## HOW DO I KNOW I AM GETTING MY OWN PET BACK?

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This is a common question. If you are reading this, it means that your veterinarian's pet aftercare provider uses Paws e-Track, the leading web-based tracking system for pet aftercare.

This means that your pet is tracked throughout the entire aftercare and cremation process, ensuring 100% traceability and transparency.

# HOW MUCH WILL MY PET'S AFTERCARE COST?

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The cost of your pet's aftercare depends on the type of service you choose, and any memorial items or keepsakes you would like for your pet. Your veterinarian is able to provide these costs to you as part of your discussion about your pet's aftercare.



# TREASURING YOUR TIME

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If you have decided that euthanasia is the most appropriate choice for all involved, you may choose a variety of ways to spend the last months/weeks/days of your pet's life. You may want to spend additional time with your pet, doing special things together. That might mean giving extra attention, including petting, grooming, holding them or making them special meals to eat. (Be cautious about upsetting gastrointestinal issues- check with your veterinarian if you have any questions about what would be suitable). You may decide to go on a special trip or walk. When you have decided on the time for the euthanasia, you may choose to be present or not. There is no right or wrong choice, only a loving choice.

**"I HAD NEVER GONE THROUGH THE LOSS OF  
A PET AND IT HIT ME A LOT HARDER THAN I  
EXPECTED. I KNOW THAT TIME WILL HEAL,  
BUT IT'S NICE KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT  
AND WHAT IS NORMAL"**

**- JUSTIN**



