

Why choose in-home euthanasia?

More and more people are learning about the beautiful option of in-home euthanasia for their pets. No one ever says they want to spend their final moments in a hospital. The comfort of home is what it's all about. The many benefits of in-home euthanasia:

- The presence of family and friends
- Allowing your pet to rest at home / no upsetting car ride
- The presence of other pets
- Grieving in private
- The ability to set a calming atmosphere i.e. candles, music, pictures, etc
- Location selection if very personalized / inside or outside
- Religious freedoms
- Home burial convenience
- Privacy afterwards, on your terms

In-home pet euthanasia opens up many wonderful possibilities for you, your family, and your beloved pet. Together, you can decide when the time is right.

How will I know it's the right time?

Look for changes in your companion:

- Change in appetite or drinking
- No longer interested in playing
- Becoming confused
- Unable to stand on their own
- Becoming incontinent
- Having fewer "good" days

Determining the quality of life for your pet is very individual and best determined by you and your family. There are Quality of Life worksheets that your veterinarian may be able to provide you. However, no worksheet is completely accurate and perfectly suited to every pet. The doctors listed in this directory can talk with you about the changes you see in your pet and help you determine if euthanasia is the best choice.

What if I am not ready for euthanasia yet?

Euthanasia is a very personal choice and is not right for every family or every situation. If you know your pet is sick, hurting, or has just been diagnosed with a terminal condition, and you are not ready to say goodbye, you may want to look into hospice or palliative end-of-life care until you are ready. The important thing is get help for your pet in some capacity to help alleviate pain, infection, and the myriad of things your pet may be faced with as death approaches. In the grand scheme of things, if your pet was left to die out in the wild, nature would create a relatively quick death i.e. starvation, predation, the elements. etc. When we bring pets into our home, we block out nature and thus it becomes part of our unwritten contract with them to prevent undue suffering. If your pet is suffering, and you decide to let them pass on their own, we strongly recommend getting your current veterinarian involved or a veterinarian who specializes in hospice care. So many of us hope that our pet will pass peacefully in the night, but this is very rare. We know that they will eventually pass on their own without our help, but the only way to ensure it is peaceful is to manage pain completely and provide palliative care. Hospice care can be a beautiful way to provide for your pet during its' final days. If it is not an option, then euthanasia can be a wonderful gift for your pet....one of the best you can give them their entire life.

What sorts of preparations need to be made beforehand?

It needs to be said that there is no rule stating you must euthanize an ailing pet. It is a very personal decision. Some families prefer a natural death with accompanying hospice care. Many people will provide the best care they can, as long as the pet appears comfortable, and then choose euthanasia when conventional medicine can no longer manage pain and anxiety.

Once you have made the decision to euthanize, you can then reflect on the following options:

- When should it take place?
.....best decided by your family and regular veterinarian
- Who should be there?
.....family, friends, other pets
- Where should we gather?
.....inside, outside, in a favorite place, wherever the pet is comfortable
- How should it take place?

.....personalized ceremony, quiet setting, etc.

The veterinarian you choose to help you with your pet's end-of-life transition will be able to help guide you in some of these decisions. For their part, they will help decide what is best for your pet given their physical condition and comfort. Ensuring your pet passes peacefully is of the utmost importance and will be considered in all decision making.

What kinds of animals are helped?

The veterinarians within this directory will provide euthanasia primarily for domestic pets such as dogs, cats, and exotics. You may look under their expanded information to see if they help other species as well. It never hurts to call and see if they can assist you. If they cannot help, they might know someone who can.

Who comes to my home?

Euthanasia must be conducted by a licensed veterinarian and therefore, it will be a veterinarian who comes to your home. Some services will have a technician or assistant that is also present to help with euthanasia and if cremation is needed, aid in carrying the pet to their vehicle, such as with very large dogs. It is always good to talk about who will be there, during the initial call, so that you know what to expect.

How do I handle the body afterwards?

Once the decision has been made to proceed with euthanasia, aftercare arrangements need to be discussed. It is important to talk about this with everyone involved. In most areas, cremation or home burial will be your options. Cremation is usually performed by the local pet crematorium, either one of your choosing or chosen by the veterinarian you are working with.

There are two forms of cremation to consider:

1. Private Cremation - private cremation means your pet will be cremated by themselves and the ashes will be returned to you.

2. Communal Cremation - communal cremation means your pet will be cremated with other pets and the ashes will be scattered, usually on the crematory grounds.

Home Burial For most cities and suburbs across the country, home burial is not allowed within city limits. If you are interested in a home burial, we recommend checking with your local city officials to obtain the rules and regulations for your area. If allowed, an average size pet should be buried deep enough that they can be covered with at least 3 feet of earth. The reason the depth is important is to not only prevent your pet from being disturbed by wildlife, but also in preventing the wildlife from ingesting a pet that has euthanasia solution within them. It is the responsibility of the pet owner, as well as the veterinarian, to prevent injury to wildlife. Because the burial depth is deep, you also need to be cautious of water and power lines. KEEP YOURSELF SAFE.

How can I honor my friend?

For some, honoring your friend is an important part of both the grieving and healing process and can be approached in many different ways. You have already been honoring your pet by giving he/she the best quality of life you could and that is what is most important. Now, as the end-of-life approaches, it can be as simple as telling a story about the good times you shared together, making or purchasing a keepsake, releasing a memorial balloon, drawing pictures, etc. There are also many memorial websites out there where you can send in a picture and story of your pet to share with other animal lovers. The most important thing about honoring your pet is that it is done with love and helps you feel good about the time you shared together.

My pet is like my child. How will I ever get over this loss?

There is no greater love than that between a parent and child. Some may say a dog is just a dog or a cat is just a cat, but those who love them know differently. Fortunately, today's world is recognizing that love more and more and acknowledging how hard the loss of a pet can be. There are counseling services designed to help families through this difficult time. If you know you or someone in your family is going to have a very hard time with the loss of a pet, you might want to connect with a local counselor even before euthanasia takes place. Healing takes time and everyone grieves differently. Please remember that you are not alone and that others care.