

Love and Loss

Saying Goodbye to a Dear Friend

Losing a beloved pet is never easy. Understanding your pet's condition and making important decisions at the end of life can be overwhelming. Here is some information to help as you prepare to say goodbye to a life that was loved. Every pet is unique - if your pet has special needs, please let us know.

Understanding What to Expect

When you receive bad news about your pet's health, you will have questions about treatment options and prognosis. You may also wonder about quality of life and whether or when euthanasia will be needed.

Your veterinarian will answer all your questions at each visit, but remember that your pet's condition will change over time. Follow-up calls or visits help tailor the treatment plan to your pet. For example, medication can improve appetite or control symptoms like coughing, nausea, and pain. You may need help making important decisions or with evaluating quality of life.



Preparing to Say Goodbye

Making decisions in advance has several benefits: it gives you time to discuss options with family, it decreases stress, and allows you to focus on your pet.

- ♥ Think of things you would like to do, like taking photos or videos, or a special meal or trip. Are there any family or friends who would like to visit and say goodbye?
- ♥ Do you want to be present for euthanasia? Some family members may wish to be present, while others do not. Do you know what to expect during euthanasia?
- ♥ Do you want your pet to pass at home or other special place? In-home euthanasia service is available
- ♥ Care of the body may consist of burial, or cremation with the option of having ashes returned to you in an urn.
- ♥ You may be comforted by keepsakes such as tags, a whisker or lock of hair, or a paw print.
- ♥ Would you like to memorialize your pet? Examples include a donation to a pet charity, or a memorial stone.



Coping With Loss

A beloved pet is a member of the family. Feelings of sadness, guilt, anger, and loss can be surprising, yet these are normal feelings. A pet's passing can also bring up painful memories of other losses. Many people are not prepared for the grief that follows the loss of a pet.

Suggestions for coping with the loss of a pet:

- ♥ The first days are the hardest. You may need time to rest and reflect. You may crave the company of people who want to hear about your pet, or you may need time alone.
- ♥ Everyone has their own way of grieving - try to understand if another family member's response is different than yours.
- ♥ Guilt is always part of grieving. It is impossible to experience loss without regret for things we could have done better. Expect this, and try to give yourself understanding. Ask your veterinarian: in many cases, different decisions would not have affected the long term outcome. Remember that you shared love, life, and memories with your pet - these are much larger and more wonderful than anything that happened in the last days.
- ♥ Healing happens at its own pace. There is no way to hasten grieving, so give yourself the time you need.
- ♥ If feelings of grief seem overwhelming, seek support from people who understand. This may be a friend, a support group (in person or online), or a counselor.
- ♥ Books for children can help kids understand death and cope with sadness. Online resources have information for parents on how to help their kids with pet loss.
- ♥ Resource lists for adults and children are available from your veterinarian or from www.PeaceForPets.net

Peace for Pets Compassionate Home Euthanasia
Evelyn Ivey DVM ♥ (510)255-5984
More information at www.PeaceForPets.net

