



Euthanasia



The loss of a loved one is the most painful thing we endure throughout our lives. We become attached at the heart strings and are left behind with tears that hang inside our souls forever. We must learn how to let go when the time is right for our pets.

What is euthanasia?

Deriving from the Greek meaning of 'good death', euthanasia is a matter of practical and ethical necessity and therefore the decision to euthanise your pet can be one of the hardest decisions you ever have to make in your life. The ultimate heartbreak...

As humans we have the utmost ability to avoid thinking about death. The fear of death can be immobilising to some. Anticipation of the death of the pet can be so overwhelming that one may be sorely tempted to delay making the necessary decision but the pet suffers much more than the owner. Fatal accidents and death while undergoing surgery sometimes take the responsibility of the decision away from us. Otherwise, we are honour-bound to exercise this ultimate trust and duty in a timely way. That will be one of the most painful moments in your life. And it will always be one of the most loving.

To some people, the decision to employ euthanasia is a convenience and is as easy and simple as throwing away an unwanted toy. To others it is a desperate, necessary resolution they want but cannot easily confront. Fortunately, most of the rest of us fall somewhere between these two extremes. Choosing euthanasia is probably one of the most upsetting decisions one will ever have to make. But to own and care for a pet, we must accept the dreaded responsibility of possibly being forced to make this upsetting choice someday.

Our cognition leaves us with thoughts of 'I am healthy so I am not going to die', but with pets that do not have a voice there are signs they may have had enough. Let's face it: cats and dogs are lazy most of the time but they have a particular disinterest in food, inability to reach the toilet from their bed, withdrawing from snuggles on the couch with us, or being vocal and unsettled at night. We as humans should know there is something wrong with our furry friend.

The process of coming to terms with euthanasia is the right thing for your pet...

Making the phone call or writing the e-mail will be the first, very difficult step in making the decision. Our veterinary nurses at Vetcall will go through the euthanasia process with you and help decide when the most appropriate time to perform the procedure is.

Most people find it helpful to have at least one support person with them on the day. Knowing whether to have your children present can be confusing. School age children can find being there beneficial for the grieving process. Losing their pet can often be their first experience of losing someone close to them. Younger children can

be distressed at seeing their parents so upset. Children of any age find comfort in drawing pictures and for older children writing some words about their pet. Some people chose to have their other pets present during the procedure. Others prefer to have them in another area of the house and then let them come and say goodbye once the pet has passed away.

The euthanasia process is least stressful for the pet and owner if it can be done at home free of time constraints and distractions, in a place where your pet feels comfortable. Common spots chosen include under a tree in the garden, on their favourite bed or on the floor in the living area.

On the day, the vet will arrive and firstly explain the process to everyone who is present. Some important paperwork then needs to be completed. A sedative injection is given into the muscle which takes about five to ten minutes to take effect. Your pet will become very sleepy and relaxed after this injection. Once your pet is sufficiently relaxed, a second injection is given into the vein, which will result in cardiac and respiratory arrest. There may be some movement of the face and body after you pet has gone and also some release of bodily fluids. The vet will check your pet's heart and inform you of when they have passed away.

It will have been discussed with the veterinary nurse what you would like to do with your pet's body once they have passed away. You can choose to bury them in your own backyard, take them to a family member's property for burial, or have their body cremated. Ashes can be returned to you for scattering or for keeping in a wooden box or ceramic urn. We use a very reputable company for the cremation process, so you can be assured that your pet's remains will be treated with the upmost respect. It generally takes about 5-10 days for ashes to be returned to you.

The remaining pets in the household will undergo their own process of grieving. In general animals appear to be more accepting of death than humans; they may just simply sniff their friend and then walk away. Others may curl up with their friend for a few minutes or want to sleep in their spot once they have gone. They can be withdrawn and sleepy for a few days and some may go off their food. It is important that if you bury your pet in the backyard to choose an appropriate spot and take precautions so that other pets in the household cannot access their grave.

Final thoughts...

If you are realising it is time to let your pet rest and need some advice, call your local Vetcall team for all the supportive and necessary advice. They will ensure you are well briefed in the decision making to euthanize your pet harmoniously.