

SAYING GOODBYE



CARNFORTH
pet care

Every pet owner would prefer their pet to pass away in their sleep but unfortunately natural deaths are rarely as peaceful and pain-free as we picture them. Euthanasia is without doubt the kindest way to provide a dignified end for your pet. This guide will hopefully inform you of what choices you have and what to expect every step of the way.

Making The Decision

This is the hardest part for any pet owner and it is perfectly normal to worry about whether you will know when the time is right. Discuss the decision with your family, friends and your vet and it might help to look back at photos and videos for comparison. A good rule of thumb to remember is that if you are thinking about it and talking about it, then it is almost certainly nearing the right time. One of the hardest facts about euthanasia is that it is you who makes the decision and in the end it is the final and ultimate kindness you can give to your pet.

Quality of Life

Pain – are they free from persistent pain?

Appetite and thirst – are they eating and drinking enough to maintain their strength and body condition?

Restfulness – are they able to rest or sleep comfortably and contentedly for sufficient lengths of time?

Mobility – can they move themselves without assistance from you to perform basic tasks?

Dignity – are they able to maintain their own personal hygiene and toileting requirements?

Demeanour - do they seem contented and happy like the pet you know?

You may find that not all these apply to your pet but there is often much overlap between them. The decision to finally put your pet to sleep should always be made with their welfare at the forefront of that decision. We often see a silver lining in a situation as a reason to delay our own heartache but if we approach the decision through their perspective, it is much easier to make the correct decision for them.

Where and when will it happen?

Where possible, this will be up to you and we will try our best to accommodate your preferences. For some owners this may be a home visit when the whole family can be there or it might mean leaving them at the surgery and not staying at all. There is no right or wrong choice and sometimes this decision is out of your hands, such as following an injury or accident. Whilst we endeavour to fulfil your requests, they may not always be practical but we are happy to assess this and by providing us with enough notice and as much information as reasonably possible, we will try to accommodate this with the least amount of delay to you and your pet.

How will it be done?

This worries many owners and is one of the reasons some choose not to stay with their pet when they might have liked to. The exact procedure will vary slightly depending on your pet but put simply they are given an overdose of anaesthetic. For dogs, cats and rabbits this may be with an injection into a vein and most of the time it will be possible for you to hold or comfort your pet while it is done.





In some cases a sedative may be required first to make your pet more comfortable but this can make finding a vein harder and some sedatives can make your pet feel a little sick which you might want to avoid. For small pets like hamsters, rats and guinea pigs, they may need to be sedated either by injection or with a gas first. These species do not have veins big enough to allow the same type of injection and once unconscious, will usually have an injection into their abdomen. In all cases, the anaesthetic overdose allows them to drift away peacefully.

Will it be over quickly?

The anaesthetic reaches the heart and brain within seconds and your pet will be aware of nothing after the initial needle placement. If a sedative is used first, it may take a few moments longer because their blood pressure is lower. Every animal has reflexes which can happen at the time of death and these can sometimes look quite shocking or upsetting but if you know what they are, you can be prepared. Do remember these happen after death, your pet is not aware of them at all and will not feel any pain or discomfort. They may take some big, deep breaths or gasps but this is just a reflex spasm and not normal breathing. There may be some muscle twitching and they can empty their bladder or bowels. In many cases none of these things happen and your pet will simply be peaceful. However, knowing what to expect will make the process much easier to deal with.

What happens next?

This is up to you and will depend on where you have chosen to have your pet put to sleep. We will give you as much time as you need to say goodbye.

You may choose to bury your pet at home but the most common choice is cremation. For a standard cremation we will arrange for your pet to be collected and cremated and the ashes will remain with the crematorium. You can also choose to have an individual cremation and have your pet's ashes returned for you to keep, scatter or bury depending on what you would prefer. This service can be arranged through us or in certain circumstances you may be able to take your pet to the crematorium or have them collect from your home. We carefully select our cremation company to ensure that they meet with our ethos and we have a good relationship with them.

The Grieving Process

There is no easy or quick way to get over the loss of a much loved pet but there are some excellent resources available to help you - please ask us for details of these. Talking about your pet to those around you and trying to remember the many wonderful times you shared will help enormously.

Summary

Saying goodbye to a much loved pet, whether they are old and at the end of a long and happy life, or young and have not had the years you had hoped for, is the most difficult decision you will face as a pet owner. The ability to save your pet from unnecessary suffering at the end of their life is the final act of kindness you can give to them. If you know what your choices are and what to expect, you will hopefully feel comfortable with the decisions you've made and know you can discuss this with us at any time.

