

The Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement



PREPARING YOURSELF FOR YOUR PET'S EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia is often the most emotional and painful decision you make for your animal. And because this decision is so difficult, it can be comforting to you to know what to expect from the procedure and how you can best meet both your and your animal's needs. This brochure suggests a few of the most important questions to ask your veterinarian beforehand. Knowing what to expect may help make the experience just a little easier.

1. Where will the euthanasia be performed? Can it be done at my home? Some veterinarians make house calls for euthanasia and some work solely in a hospital. Keep in mind how your animal typically reacts while in the veterinarian's office and also your comfort level with having the procedure done there or at your home.

2. What will happen to my animal's body afterwards? How long will it take to get my pet's remains back? Do you have a special burial spot in mind or would you like your animal cremated? If you would like to have your pet's ashes returned, be sure to request a private cremation. Your veterinarian can also take care of your animal's remains for you.

The veterinary office of your choice should be able to inform you of local laws and costs surrounding these options.

3. What method do you use to perform the euthanasia? The euthanasia process itself is designed to be as quick and peaceful for you and your animal as possible. Euthanasia solution is ideally injected intravenously and is a fast-acting sedative which stops the heart within seconds. This requires the placement of either a catheter or needle directly into the vein. The veterinarian will test it first, to make sure it is in the vein and that the solution is administered as desired. In some instances, it may be necessary for your veterinarian to administer an additional sedative before the euthanasia solution. If possible, discuss with your veterinarian or his or her office staff how euthanasia is performed at that particular office. Your animal's health, temperament, and your preferences should each be considered when making this decision. Be sure that you are comfortable with the procedure that you and your veterinarian choose.

4. What can I expect during the euthanasia? Be aware that your animal may gasp, have bodily tremors, vocalize, or void urine and/or

feces after the heart is stopped. This may be unpleasant, but the reactions are natural -- and your pet has already passed on.

5. Can I be with my pet during the euthanasia? Can I spend some time with him/her after? Once you know what to expect from the procedure, you can decide whether or not you wish to be there, or if you would like other important people to be with you during that time. How and when you say goodbye is an important and very personal decision. Talk with your veterinarian to make sure you can be present with your animal if you so choose.

Final Thoughts

After you have been through this experience, you probably will experience mixed feelings including sadness, guilt, or even anger. Others may have difficulty understanding your bond with your pet. Know that there is support. The Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement (APLB) has a major Internet website (www.aplb.org) with a wealth of information including helpful literature, local support groups and even a special chat room open several times during the week. Your veterinarian may also know of additional local support.

Euthanasia literally means "good death." Your careful consideration of this process will hopefully make it a little easier on both you and your precious companion.

APLB
www.aplb.org