



COPING WITH YOUR PET'S EUTHANASIA

In some circumstances your vet may suggest having your pet "put to sleep" (euthanised). For example, if your pet has a terminal illness from which he or she cannot recover, or if he or she has intractable pain. This will enable your pet to die in peace with dignity and without further suffering. It can be a very hard decision to make but it is one of the kindest things that an owner can do for a suffering pet.

What happens when an animal is "put to sleep"?

The vet gives the animal an intravenous injection of a lethal dose of a barbiturate anaesthetic usually into a leg vein. Some vets choose to place a catheter in the vein before euthanising a pet so that you can hold them while they pass away. Following the injection, the animal loses consciousness within a few seconds and passes away quietly. This is a very controlled and painless method of euthanasia. For very nervous pets, it is sometimes necessary to give a sedative to calm them prior to euthanasia.

Is it usual for the owner to stay with their pet when it is "put to sleep"?

Most vets accept that owners wish to remain with their pet. However, sometimes owners get very distressed and this is communicated to their pet. In this instance it may be preferable for the animal to be left with the vet and nurse while it is euthanised. If owners wish, they can see their pet after the injection has been given. Sometimes the decision to euthanise an animal is made after your pet has been anaesthetised for a diagnostic procedure, for example, during an exploratory surgery. Under these circumstances it is most humane to put the animal to sleep while it is still under the anaesthetic, rather than subjecting it to the discomfort of recovering from surgery prior to euthanasia.

Can I have my pet put to sleep at home or is it better to take him to the surgery?

In some cases, it is possible to arrange for a home euthanasia. However, this is more expensive than euthanasia at the clinic because you have to pay for the vet and nurse's time for the period they are away from the surgery. Sometimes it is not always practical for one of our vets and a nurse to come out for a home euthanasia due to commitments at the clinic. However, it is usually possible to arrange an appointment at the surgery at a quiet time to avoid undue distress to both you and your pet.

What can I do with my pet's remains?

There are several options available:

- **Individual cremation** – Your pet's ashes are returned to you in a Jarrah box with their named engraved on a brass plaque on the top of the box.
- **Bulk cremation** – Your pet's ashes are not returned.
- **Burial in a pet cemetery** – we can help you arrange this option.



Grieving for your pet:

It is very natural to feel upset and emotional when your pet dies. Do not be afraid to show your feelings in front of the vet. They will understand. It will take time to get over your loss, usually 2-3 months. It often helps to talk about your pet's death with others. It is quite normal to feel angry, this is part of the process of coming to terms with your loss. Try not to feel guilty or blame yourself or your vet for your pet's death. Remember that you cared for your animal and did all you could when it was ill. Vets cannot always save an animal's life. Treasure your memories. Remember the good times and what you loved most about your pet.

If you feel you have no one to talk to about your loss, grief counselling services are available.

Helping children cope with the loss of a pet:

The death of a pet is often a child's first experience of death. Tell them the truth. Encourage them to talk about their feelings and tell them how you feel. Help them to understand that they are not to blame. Talk to them about your pet and concentrate on the good times. Do not get a new pet too soon. Your child will need time to get over the death of the old pet.