



## Client information

[www.penbodevets.co.uk](http://www.penbodevets.co.uk)

Stratton 01288 359500 | Holsworthy 01409 253822 | Camelford 01840 213277 | Bradworthy 01409 241241

# Saying Goodbye

## *When is the Right Time?*

Making the decision to say goodbye.



Making the decision to say goodbye to our pet can be incredibly difficult. It is sometimes hard to know when the time is right. They aren't able to tell us if they are in pain or feeling unwell, so it is our responsibility to look for any signs or changes that suggest their quality of life is deteriorating.

You may notice behavioural changes such as becoming withdrawn, quiet, or disorientated. They may no longer be interested in going out, or having any physical contact with those they are normally close with.

Appetite can also be a factor in your decision making, along with incontinence which can be difficult to manage and result in your pet being uncomfortable.

Some of our pets may have long term, chronic conditions that are becoming more difficult to treat, or they could have an injury or illness that is affecting their wellbeing, physically or mentally.

To prevent further pain and suffering, it is important that we show them love and kindness by acting in their best interests. It can be helpful to plan ahead. Talk to one of our team who are here to guide and support you, this can be over the phone or by face-to-face appointment.

We know how heart-breaking it is to lose a pet, they are part of your family, so we understand how difficult this decision is to make.

## *Should I be there?*

Parting with a pet.



Deciding whether or not to be present during the euthanasia of your pet is a very personal decision. It can be helpful to talk this through with friends or family, or your vet or nurse. Some people feel able to be with their pet during euthanasia and others feel it is too difficult. You should do whatever is best for you and your pet. There is no right or wrong decision. Say your goodbyes at the right time for you and don't be afraid to let your vet or nurse know how you feel. We are always on hand to support you and to talk through your thoughts and feelings. If you feel it may be too difficult to be present during the euthanasia, rest assured that one of our nurses will be by your pet's side, reassuring them throughout.

## *What Should I Expect?*

When the day comes to say goodbye.



One of the first decisions you need to make when the day comes to say goodbye to your pet, is whether you would prefer the euthanasia to happen at the practice or in your own home. Home visits can be arranged ahead of time, during our opening hours, so that we can ensure a vet and nurse are available.

If you are coming into the practice, please let our reception team know what the visit is for so we can look at booking a longer appointment, at a quieter time. When you arrive for your appointment, we may be able to seat you in a quiet consulting room while you wait, rather than sitting in the waiting room. If this is not possible, you may wish to stay in your car until the vet is ready to see you. Telephone us to let us know when you arrive, and we will come out to get you when we are ready. If you have a dog, we can perform euthanasia in the car if you would prefer this.

During the procedure you will be with a vet and a nurse. You may wish to bring a blanket or bed for your pet to sit on. Large dogs will often stay on the floor, with the vet coming down to their level for the procedure. Smaller dogs or cats often sit on their bed or a blanket on the consulting table. The vet will talk you through the procedure and reassure you. You will be asked to sign a form giving your consent for the euthanasia, as well as choosing what you would like to do with your pet after their passing.

Your pet may be given a sedative first to help relax them. This may make them very sleepy but also very calm and settled to ensure the procedure is as comfortable as possible for them. A small area of hair will be shaved, usually from their front leg, and a cannula may be placed into the vein before gently giving the injection. The injection is fast acting, and your pet will likely pass away quickly. Their breathing and heart will stop, but sometimes reflexes take a little longer, so it is not unusual for them to take a few small involuntary breaths after this. These are normal reactions following euthanasia and it is important to remember that your pet has gone and is completely unaware, however it can be distressing for you to see if you are not expecting it.

If your pet is a small animal, such as a hamster or guinea pig, your vet may administer anaesthetic gas first, so they are asleep for the injection. You will not be able to be present while the anaesthetic gas is administered, but if you would like to be present for when they pass away then the vet can return your pet to you once asleep, and they will then administer the final injection.

Once your pet has passed away, the vet will listen with a stethoscope to check that your pet's heart has stopped and confirm that they have died. We allow you as much time as you need to say goodbye and leave the room to give you some privacy, but we completely understand if you would rather leave straight away.

## *What Happens Next?*

Deciding on aftercare of the body.



After your pet has passed away, you will be asked what you would like to do with their body. We understand this can be a difficult decision to make at the time and so a decision can either be made before, or within a couple of days after.

### *Burial*

Some owners prefer to bury their pet in their own garden and so we can help you to prepare the body to transport home. If you opt for burial, there are some simple guidelines which may help:

- The grave needs to be 1.25 metres deep. This is to prevent your pet's body being dug up by other animals.
- Do not bury the body in non-degradable or plastic bags. Either use a casket or simply wrap the body in a towel or blanket.
- Please take great care to avoid electric cables, and water and gas pipes when digging.

## Cremation

We work with Pet Cremation Services, who are accredited through the International Association of Pet Cemeteries and Crematories. If you choose to cremate your pet's body, you will have the option of an individual cremation or a communal cremation.

- *Individual cremation* - your pet is cremated on their own and their ashes are returned in your choice of casket or scatter pouch. The crematorium has a number of casket or scatter pouch options available that we can request your pet's ashes be put into, on your behalf. Your choice can be requested at the time of euthanasia, just let your vet or nurse know your preference. A current list of available options can be found on their website. If you do not have a preference, your pet's ashes will be returned to you in a bamboo casket.
- *Communal cremation* - your pet is cremated with other pets and some of their ashes are scattered on the beautiful garden at St Francis Pet Crematorium near Newquay, owned and maintained by Pet Cremation Services.



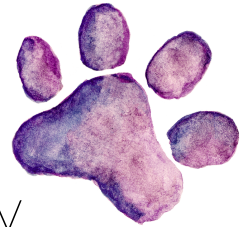
St Francis Pet Crematorium also offer the option of taking your pet's body to the crematorium yourself, if preferred. They will usually offer same day cremation so the ashes can be taken home with you. Once at the crematorium, you can visit their Farewell Room where you can say your final farewells, in a peaceful, private environment.

If you would like help deciding what to do with your pet after their passing, please speak to your vet, nurse or receptionist and they will go through the options with you to make sure you have all the information you need, including pricing.



You also have the option to take your pet to a different crematorium should you wish.

## *Pet Memorial Ideas*



Other ways to cherish your pet's memory

There are lots of things you can do to help remember your pet. You could:

- ask the vet if you can keep a lock of hair – don't be embarrassed, vets get asked this one quite a lot
- ask for a paw print from the pet crematorium or your vet
- perform a ceremony, like a funeral service, with all those who loved your pet
- make a scrapbook of memories
- set up an area with a photo of them, their collar and a candle
- write a goodbye letter and bury it with them
- write a poem or short story talking about your life with them
- share your loss with others who have been through it
- make a charitable donation in your pet's memory

## *Grieving for a Pet*



What to expect after losing a pet.

Our pets are trusted companions and beloved members of the family, so it is completely natural to feel upset. Try to treasure the memories you have made and talk to family and friends.

You needn't feel embarrassed about showing your emotions – we understand that you will be upset.

It takes time to get over the loss of a loved one, and although reactions differ, you could feel a mixture of emotions, such as:

- sadness
- loneliness
- anger
- guilt
- doubt

It has been shown that pet loss can trigger an emotional response to previous (human) loss. It is important to seek additional support if this happens.

Though it is completely natural, try not to feel guilty or blame yourself. The decision for euthanasia is made with your pet's best interests at heart.

## *Supporting Children with Grief*



When a pet dies, it may be a child or young person's first experience of death or loss.

They may feel that they have lost their best friend and an important member of their family.

They may feel very sad and lonely. Feelings of numbness, disbelief and denial are common. Occasionally they may feel anger or guilt or feel responsible for the death. It is important that these feelings are recognised. Experiencing pet loss can help form coping strategies for life.

- Don't underestimate their feelings. Encourage the child to talk about their pet and express their emotions; writing a story or poem, or drawing a picture of their pet can be helpful
- Try to understand the importance of the animal and what the child has lost; don't trivialise or minimize their grief
- Use language that the child will understand – straightforward words such as “dead” or “died” are more appropriate than “put to sleep”, which may cause some confusion and anxiety for younger children
- Be prepared to talk about how the animal died, but don't include distressing details
- Inform their teacher if the child is very upset, but do so discreetly
- Don't be afraid to share your own feelings of sadness
- If children are having other difficulties in their lives, a pet's death may be too much to cope with. Particular care must be taken to understand their problem and professional help may be needed.

## *Where to get Support*



The time leading up to and following euthanasia, can be filled with mixed and raw emotions. Your pet has been a special companion and member of your family.

Some people experience intense feelings of grief, similar to a human loss. For others, there is a sense of calm and relief. Sharing what you are feeling and experiencing with others before or after euthanasia can be helpful. You may find that friends and family can offer you the support you need.

If, however you are struggling or would find it helpful to speak to someone, our team are always here to support you. You can ask to speak to someone who you know and who knew your pet well, or we can arrange for you to speak with a member of our team trained in bereavement support. If you would rather speak to someone who is unconnected to you then the team at Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support Service are just a phone call away.

The Blue Cross provide a free confidential helpline and email support service. To make contact call: 0800 096 6606 (between the hours of 8:30am-8:30pm everyday)

Or email: [pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk)



## **Pet Bereavement Support Service**

<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-bereavement-and-pet-loss>