

PRE-PLANNING AND PET AFTERCARE

SUPPORT GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



Losing a pet is one of the most difficult things a person can experience. Whether the loss of a pet is sudden, or something you've anticipated for weeks or months, it's a highly emotional time.



“THE VETERINARIAN SHOWED US WHAT OPTIONS WE HAD AND WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN. IT WAS NICE TO HAVE SOMEONE THERE TO HELP WITH THIS VERY HARD DECISION”

- JANET K.



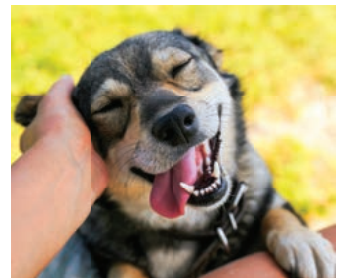
HOW DO I KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME?

Your veterinarian is a good resource to help you know when it's time.

Several tools or techniques may provide more concrete answers to this subjective question.

- When your pet's health, mobility or comfort have been declining slowly, it may be helpful to view photos or videos of your pet from before the illness. Remember how your pet looked, behaved and interacted with you.
- Make a list of three to five things your pet likes to do, such as going for walks, playing with other pets, or enjoying their meals. When your pet is consistently unable to enjoy these things, it may be time to discuss euthanasia.
- Mark good and bad days on a calendar. This could be as simple as a happy or sad face for good or bad. As the bad days start to outnumber the good, it may be time to consider euthanasia.

Thinking about the end of your pet's life, and the choices around aftercare options may be better done in advance.



EVALUATE YOUR PET'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Determining the quality of life for a pet is often used to make end-of-life decisions. It's important to remember that each pet is an individual, and what constitutes a poor quality of life for one pet (such as lying around all day) may be normal for another. Although a pet's enjoyment of life depends on a variety of factors, physical symptoms — such as unrelenting pain or extreme difficulty breathing — should weigh heavily in the euthanasia decision. These factors constitute very poor quality of life, regardless of other factors.

As hard as it may be to consider end-of-life decisions, it is recommended that you start thinking about these issues early in the process, when your mind may be more clear. Decisions may seem forced or pressured if you wait until there is a crisis.





EUTHANASIA – WHAT TO EXPECT

If you are able to plan for your pet's final appointment, your veterinarian will explain what to expect if you have not experienced the loss of a pet before and will be able to answer any questions you may have.

You may be asked to read and fill out a euthanasia consent form, and your veterinarian may explain your aftercare options at this time. You will likely have the option to be present for the appointment or not - rest assured that your pet will receive compassionate care either way. If you choose to be present, your veterinarian will likely transfer you and your pet to a quiet environment for the appointment.

The euthanasia process involves two steps – first, your pet will be given a sedative to make him feel sleepy and reduce anxiety. Once your pet is relaxed, the veterinarian will administer a quick-acting euthanasia solution that will stop the heart from beating – rest assured that your pet will not be aware that this is happening and will not feel any pain or stress.

After the veterinarian has confirmed that your pet has passed away, you may choose to leave immediately or stay with your pet's body for your final goodbye.



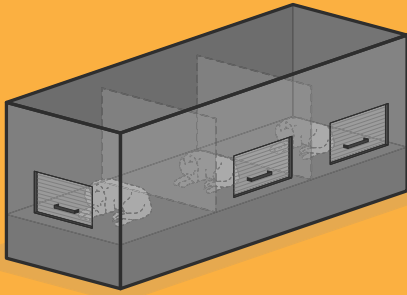
WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER MY PET IS EUTHANISED?

Most people choose to have a pet cremated, unless they have an option for burial at home, or at a cemetery specifically for pets. Be sure to check any local regulations and by-laws about the burial of animals on residential property.

When a pet is cremated, you can choose to have the cremated remains (ashes) returned to you or not. Your veterinarian may talk to you about these different options:

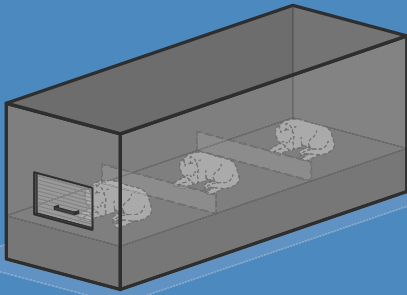
WHAT IS CREMATION?

Just like with human cremation, flame-based pet cremation uses high heat to reduce a body to cremated remains, or what most people call ‘ashes’.



PRIVATE CREMATION

Only one pet is placed in each crematory chamber and cremated, with cremated remains (ashes) returned to the family.



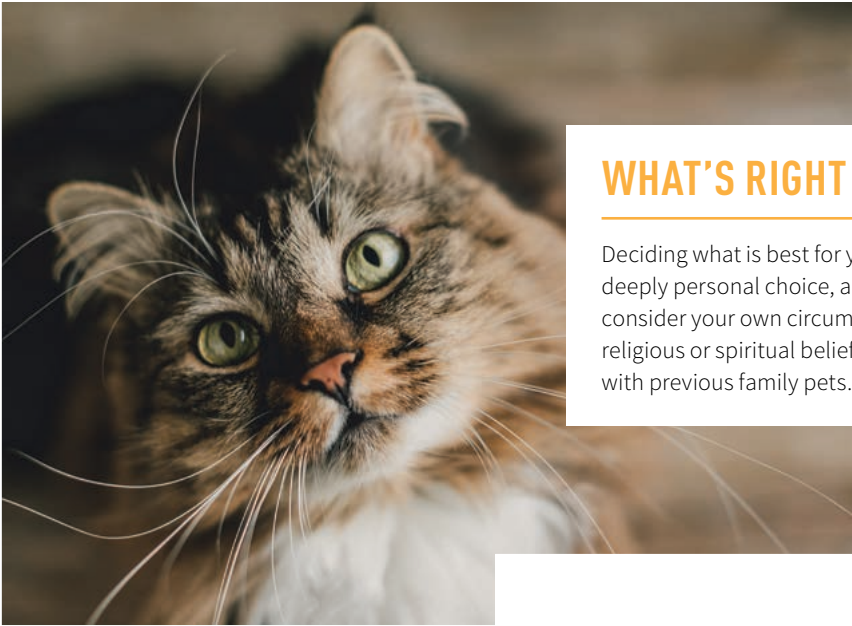
INDIVIDUAL CREMATION

More than one pet may be placed in the crematory with a physical separation from other pets. Location is documented and remains are removed one at a time and kept separate. The cremated remains (ashes) of a pet, and only that pet, are returned to the family.

The outcome of BOTH private cremation and individual cremation at a Gateway service provider is the same – a single pet’s cremated remains are returned to the pet’s family.

COMMUNAL CREMATION

Pets are placed into the crematory together and cremated together. With a communal cremation, cremated remains are not returned to the family.



WHAT'S RIGHT FOR ME?

Deciding what is best for your pet is a deeply personal choice, and you should consider your own circumstances, religious or spiritual beliefs or history with previous family pets.

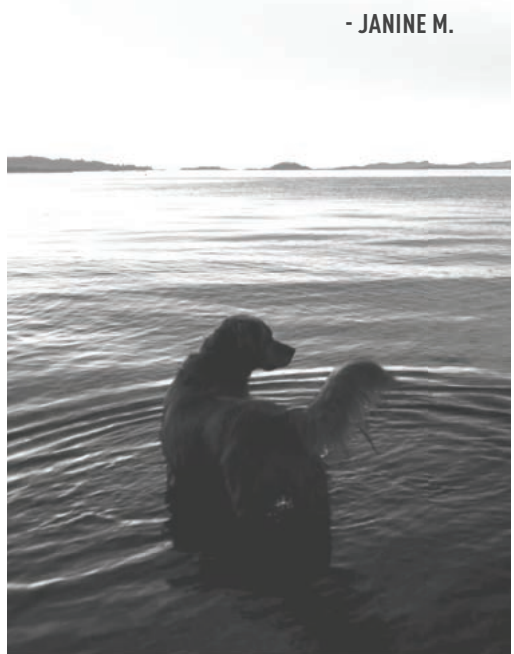
WHY CHOOSE A PRIVATE OR INDIVIDUAL CREMATION?

- I want to have her ashes so that I can scatter them somewhere that is meaningful to me.
- I want to have her physical remains in an urn where I can see it in my home.
- I want the option of creating a keepsake which incorporates his ashes – a piece of jewelry, glass keepsake or other memorial item.

TIP: If you think you may want a keepsake that requires cremated remains (ashes), – a piece of jewelry, a glass bead or other memorial item, a private or individual cremation is ideal.

“I THINK IT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE THE ASHES TO BRING HOME, MAYBE BURY IN THE BACKYARD, PLANT A TREE, PUT A PLAQUE. I THINK IT WOULD HELP MY FAMILY HEAL AFTER THE LOSS ”

- JANINE M.



WHY CHOOSE A COMMUNAL CREMATION?

- I want to remember her in my mind – I don't need her ashes with me.
- I have photos of him and that is enough for me.

TIP: Paw print impressions can be chosen with any cremation service type – you can choose to have a paw print memorial with a communal cremation.



HOW DO I KNOW I AM GETTING MY OWN PET BACK?

This is a common question. If you are reading this, it means that your veterinarian's pet aftercare provider uses Paws e-Track, the leading web-based tracking system for pet aftercare.

This means that your pet is tracked throughout the entire aftercare and cremation process, ensuring 100% traceability and transparency.

HOW MUCH WILL MY PET'S AFTERCARE COST?

The cost of your pet's aftercare depends on the type of service you choose, and any memorial items or keepsakes you would like for your pet. Your veterinarian is able to provide these costs to you as part of your discussion about your pet's aftercare.



TREASURING YOUR TIME

If you have decided that euthanasia is the most appropriate choice for all involved, you may choose a variety of ways to spend the last months/weeks/days of your pet's life. You may want to spend additional time with your pet, doing special things together. That might mean giving extra attention, including petting, grooming, holding them or making them special meals to eat. (Be cautious about upsetting gastrointestinal issues- check with your veterinarian if you have any questions about what would be suitable). You may decide to go on a special trip or walk. When you have decided on the time for the euthanasia, you may choose to be present or not. There is no right or wrong choice, only a loving choice.

**"I HAD NEVER GONE THROUGH THE LOSS OF
A PET AND IT HIT ME A LOT HARDER THAN I
EXPECTED. I KNOW THAT TIME WILL HEAL,
BUT IT'S NICE KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT
AND WHAT IS NORMAL"**

- JUSTIN



Assessing your pet's quality of life

Consider some of the following suggestions to help gain a deeper understanding of your pet's current quality of life.

Create a list of your pet's unique qualities

Your pet is a very special individual with its own special customs. These are a few general ideas to help you get started on your own list:

- **Chasing a ball**
- **Playing with other pets**
- **Greeting you at the door**
- **Playing with toys**
- **Wanting to go for walks**
- **Usual habits like scratching on a post and rubbing your legs or barking at a neighbor**

As your pet's disease progresses and these qualities fade, mark them off the list. Decide early on how many you will allow to go before too much quality diminishes from your pet's day-to-day life.

Keep a good day/bad day calendar

Evaluate what a good day would be for your pet, and also what a bad day looks like. Each evening, recall the day and decide if it was a good or bad day, marking a calendar with a happy face or a sad face. Decide how many bad days in a row occur before quality is compromised. You also can use a marble jar for this same purpose. For each good day, a marble is placed in a jar. For every bad day, a marble is removed from the jar.

Keep a journal

Keep a daily record of events in your and your pet's life. This will help you look back and reflect on changes that occur and how your life is affected.

NOTES



GIVING FAMILIES THE BEST IN PET AFTERCARE

Pet parents are demanding more for their pet aftercare needs.
We ensure that you meet those demands.

COMPLIMENTARY URNS

For a full list of our memorial products, visit our website at www.finalgift.com



HAND-CARVED ROSEWOOD URN

Enjoy the beauty and detail of this hand-carved piece of art that graces the top of this unique wooden urn.



CEDAR MEMORIAL URN

This classic urn is a timeless way to preserve treasured keepsakes and remember your pet.



TRAIL TO HEAVEN SERIES

Classically designed, this urn is a charming resting place for your pet's remains.



SERENITY URN

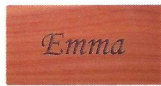
Add a favorite 4"x6" photo of your beloved friend to their final resting place and remember a life well lived.

PERSONALIZATION

*Please allow 7 - 10 days for delivery of special order urns



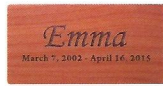
ETCHED METAL URN
(Name Only)
PER014



ETCHED WOOD URN
(Name Only)
PER027



EXTRA ETCHING ON
METAL URN
(up to 4 lines)
PER031



EXTRA ETCHING ON
WOOD URN
(up to 4 lines)
PER053



BRASS PLATE WITH
ENGRAVING
PER001



PAWS OF REMEMBRANCE KIT



finalgift.com
info@finalgift.com

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FINAL GIFT PET MEMORIAL CENTER

Saying a final goodbye to a beloved pet is a difficult and emotional experience for every member of the family; the professionals at Final Gift understand this. Having suffered the loss of our dearest companions, we were faced with the same difficult decisions you may now be experiencing. How do we properly say goodbye? How can we give our friend one last gift for the love and loyalty she gave us? We created Final Gift to give all families the best choice for Pet Aftercare in New England.

As pet owners, we treat your pet as a family member.

THE BEST IN PET AFTERCARE

Final Gift Pet Memorial Center provides the understanding and respect deserved by any family who has lost a very special member. We provide you with dignified aftercare solutions and guidance, as well as compassionate support during a challenging time.

OUR FACILITIES

Final Gift offers state of the art memorial centers and two beautiful pet cemeteries across New England. Locally managed by experienced industry professionals, our facilities have been thoughtfully designed to provide the highest level of service.



finalgift.com
info@finalgift.com

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COPING WITH THE LOSS OF A COMPANION ANIMAL

SUPPORT GUIDE FOR FAMILIES





GRIEF


Grief is a healthy and normal response to loss. Attempting to suppress feelings of grief can actually prolong the grieving process. Grief can feel like being lost. The familiar things we relied on to live each day are gone. We must find new anchors or stabilizers along the way and learn a new way of relating to the world and people around us. It is also common to replay the last moments of your pet's life repeatedly in your mind, like a videotape that keeps playing the same scene over and over. No one can hurry the process or provide a magic cure for grief. When grief is new, it is common to feel exhausted: physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Changes in appetite, sleeping patterns, or health are frequently reported. Those who are grieving often describe feelings of being out of control, isolation, and loneliness. Things that seemed so important before may now seem trivial. Others may experience a sense of "life isn't fair" or being in a tunnel or fog while everyday life swirls around them. All of these feelings are normal and part of the grieving process, which follows no organized plan, rules, timetable, formula, or schedule. Don't be surprised if you start to feel better, and then feel as if a wave has hit you. There will be ups and downs in the process of grieving.

“I HAD NEVER GONE THROUGH THE LOSS OF A PET AND IT HIT ME A LOT HARDER THAN I EXPECTED”



The purpose of healthy grieving is not to “get over” the death of a loved one, but to integrate the experience of a pet’s death into present life. In this process, it is not unusual for certain memories of your pet to become blurred. This does not mean that you are forgetting your pet or that your love is diminished. The truth is, you will ALWAYS love this very special member of your family. The hope is that as time goes on, the feelings of sadness will become less difficult. In the beginning, you may be sad to think or talk about your companion animal. Eventually, the hope is that you will be able to talk and even smile or laugh at good memories.





“I THINK IT’S GOOD TO HAVE SOMETHING TO READ BEFORE OR AFTER LOSING A PET. IT’S A REALLY NUMBING EXPERIENCE AND YOU MIGHT NOT WANT TO TALK, BUT READING SOMETHING IS QUIET AND REFLECTIVE THAT YOU CAN DO AT YOUR OWN PACE”

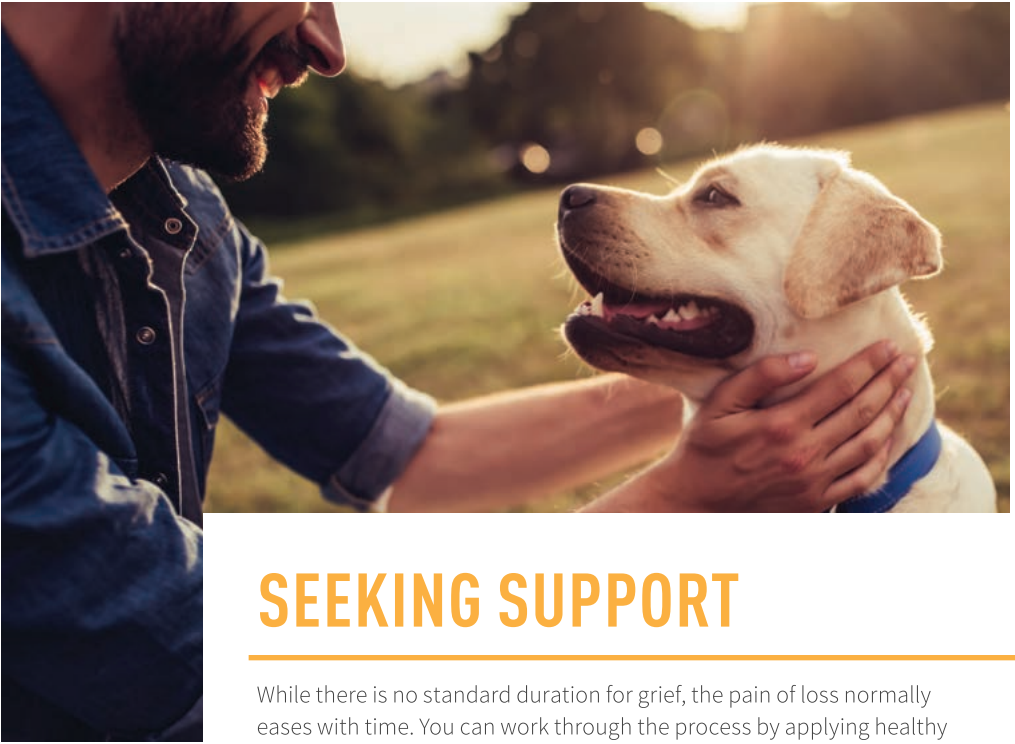
GUILT

Guilt and uncertainty are probably two of the most common emotions that people experience after the death of their pet. You may find yourself thinking continuously about what you perceive you could have, should have, or would have done to prevent or postpone your pet’s death.

Some suggestions for coping with guilt include:

1. Be truthful with yourself about why you feel guilty.
2. Write a letter to your pet expressing feelings you may be struggling with.
3. Do a reality check. Most people assume that if they had done something differently, the outcome would have been better. It’s just as likely, however, that if you had done things differently, the outcome would have been the same.
4. Remember that you are human. No one is perfect. Accepting your imperfections will aid you in working through your emotions.
5. Remember that all living things die. There is not always an answer to why bad things happen and you do not have to find someone (yourself or others) or something to blame. Realize that sometimes you are powerless and that you cannot control everything that happens to your loved ones. What you can control is how you choose to respond to the events that happen in your life.
6. Try writing or talking to a trusted friend or advisor about your thoughts and feelings of guilt. Expressing your concerns in a safe and supportive environment can help you examine your emotions from a different perspective.





SEEKING SUPPORT

While there is no standard duration for grief, the pain of loss normally eases with time. You can work through the process by applying healthy coping skills, such as talking with others about your memories and emotions and facing the grief, rather than trying to stay distracted or busy to avoid intense emotions. If your feelings of sorrow or guilt have not diminished after several weeks or if they impair your ability to engage in family, social, work, or other functions, you may wish to reach out for support. Many people have found comfort in calling a pet loss support hotline, joining a pet loss support group, reading books about coping with the death of a pet, or talking with a trusted counselor or advisor.





“I HAVE A FRAMED PICTURE NEXT TO MY LIVING PLANTS, SO SHE IS SURROUNDED BY BEAUTY IN A SPACE THAT STILL FEELS ALIVE”

CELEBRATE YOUR PET'S LIFE

Some owners would like a way to memorialize their companion animal. The following are some ways that others have found helpful:

- Conduct a memorial service
- Keep your pet's tags, toys, collars, bedding, etc.
- Keep your horse's shoes, tail, mane hair
- Save condolence cards or e-mails from friends and family
- Create a picture collage, scrapbook, story, or poem about your pet
- If you chose cremation, you may keep the ashes in an urn or locket, or you may choose to scatter them in a place that was special to your pet
- Journal your pet's story; how, when, and where you met, unique personality traits, nicknames, what you love the most, and what you'll miss the most
- Donate time, money, or talent in your pet's honor

ADOPTING AGAIN



The decision about bringing another animal into the home is very personal. Some families may decide not to adopt a new companion animal because of the emotional, physical, or financial demands involved with companion animal care. Others may feel the time is right to share their home and heart with another pet.

The time to consider adopting a new companion animal is when the entire family has had sufficient time to deal with the emotions of grief. Adopting too soon can lead to feelings of guilt or resentment toward the new family member. The important thing to remember is that bringing another animal into the home is not a betrayal of the one that is gone. You will never

replace the one you've lost. You will simply be opening your home and heart to a new friend.

For families who want to consider adoption, it will be important to remember that each companion animal has a special and unique personality. Take time to discuss different sizes, breeds, or colors before making a final decision. Consider the needs and temperament of any surviving companion animals.

Booklet content courtesy of:
The Ohio State University - Veterinary Medical Center.
Honoring the Bond, Support for Animal Owners

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GENTLE REMINDERS WHILE GRIEVING

DEAFENING SILENCE

The silence in your home after the death of a pet will be excruciatingly loud.

While the presence of even our smallest animal friends takes up physical space, many times the presence is felt with our senses. Acknowledging this will assist in preparing for the many emotions.

THE BOND WITH YOUR BELOVED PET

The relationship shared with your pet is special. There will be people who think you should not mourn for your pet or who will tell you that you should not be grieving as hard. Your grief is normal and the relationship you shared needs to be mourned.

GRIEF CAN'T BE RANKED

Sometimes our heads get in the way of our heart's desire to mourn by trying to justify our emotions. Some people will want to rank their grief. While this is normal, your grief is yours alone and deserves care and attention.



24/7 grief support is available to all through our Pet Compassion Careline. Call to reach a grief counselor today.

1 (855) 245-8214

**CALL 1 (855) 245-8214 TO
REACH A COUNSELOR TODAY**



**24/7 GRIEF SUPPORT
AVAILABLE TO ALL**

**Losing a pet is extremely painful -
you don't have to face this alone.**

The trained Pet Compassion Careline grief counselors understand how impactful the loss of a beloved pet can be and are available to offer complimentary support and counsel.

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

INFORMATION & RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES



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WHAT IS GRIEF?

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STAGES OF GRIEF

DENIAL

This stage helps you to survive loss. Your world can feel meaningless and become overwhelming. Denial is a common defense mechanism that helps to numb our emotions.

ANGER

The emotion we are most accustomed managing is anger and it is a necessary part of the healing process. It is important that you allow yourself to truly feel this stage in order to move through it.

BARGAINING

A normal reaction to feeling helpless is to bargain - often followed by thoughts of "if only". You may believe you could have done something differently to change the final outcome.

DEPRESSION

This is typically when you will really start to feel the impact of your loss. You may begin to retreat by being less social or less vocal about what you are going through.

ACCEPTANCE

Accepting your loss doesn't always mean you are back to normal or "okay". This stage is about accepting your loss, recognizing this new reality is a permanent one, and knowing you will be okay.



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SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

- Crying
- Anxiety and fear
- Difficulty sleeping
- Frustration
- Loss of focus
- Abnormal behavior
- Questioning the purpose of life
- Fatigue
- Weight loss/gain
- Digestive issues
- Headaches
- Lowered immunity
- Aches and pains

Consider speaking to your doctor or a mental health professional if these symptoms continue for more than a year after your beloved pet's passing.