

## Euthanasia - The Final Act of Caring

### Considering Euthanasia

If you are considering euthanasia it is always best to discuss your pet's condition with one of our vets or come in for an appointment before making a decision. The decision regarding euthanasia is often one of the most difficult ones you may ever have to make. You need to be fully informed about your pet's condition and the medical options available, if any. Try not to assume your pet's condition is untreatable without first discussing the situation.

### When is the right time?

There are several factors to consider in evaluating a pet's quality of life and our caring team will do all they can to answer your questions and help you with the decision. We take into account things like pain, mobility, appetite, happiness (express joy, interest, etc), hygiene, more good days than bad ones, etc.

Sometimes, even with all the facts at hand, it can still be difficult to know when the time is right.

### What does the Procedure Involve?

Firstly, a "Euthanasia Consent Form" needs to be signed; this is a legal document that allows us to perform the euthanasia. You will be given the option to settle payment before the procedure so that you do not have to do this when feeling emotional afterwards.

The vet will, in most cases, give your pet a **sedative** in the muscle of the back leg or under the skin of the neck. The injection may sting a little. This will allow your pet to slowly relax and get as comfortable as possible in about 5 to 10 minutes.

In dogs and cats, an intravenous catheter is often placed – this ensures access to a vein and once taped in place may allow you to hold your pet, if you wish to, while the injection is given. For pets who get particularly distressed at this time, we can administer a sedative to keep them calm.

We will then give an injection that is a very strong anaesthetic and the pet will fall asleep as the injection is given; it can, however, take a few minutes for the heart and breathing to stop. The eyes will remain open and some pets lose urine and pass faeces.

You will be allowed to remain with your pet for a final private goodbye and then accompanied out of the practice.

## Do You Want to Be Present?

Being present or not is a very personal choice and whatever you decide will be fine with us. Some people opt not to be present because they are embarrassed to show their emotions. Don't worry, our team members are very understanding, have often been through this process many times and certainly will not think any less of you. If, however, you prefer not to be present then rest assured that all our team members will treat your pet with the dignity and respect it deserves.

## At Home or At the Surgery?

Some owners prefer the euthanasia to be done at home and we are happy to do this. Performing euthanasia at home or at the practice has some pros and cons.

At home the pet's final moments are in familiar surroundings and so may be less stressed and some people feel less embarrassed to show their emotions. Some pets, however, can show aggressive tendencies towards strangers in their home environment. We need as much notice as possible so that the visit can be arranged at a suitable time.

At the practice, the procedure can often be done more efficiently, with support staff, other drugs and equipment readily available if needed.

## What Happens to my Pet After Euthanasia?

There are a few choices for taking care of your pet after euthanasia:

- **Home burial.** All pet owners are given the option to take their pets home for burial. Nowadays, however, this is not a common choice.
- **Cremation.** If you decide to leave everything in our hands we will arrange for your pet to be cremated. There are 2 options here:
  - **Standard Service (group cremation)** – this is a communal cremation where several pets are cremated together; this mean that you will not get any ashes back
  - **Individual (private) Cremation** – the ashes are returned to you either in a wooden casket or china urn. Perhaps you would like to scatter the ashes in your garden or on a favourite walk.
- Private services can be arranged upon request.

We use the services of a reputable pet cremation company (PCS services) based in Newbury.

## Grieving

The death of a pet can be a very painful experience. Grief is a natural part of loss. No two people experience loss in exactly the same manner however there are stages of grief that you are likely to go through. Do not feel embarrassed about grieving for the loss of an animal – our pets are, after all, beloved members of our family.

The following resources may be helpful:

- **Pet Bereavement Support Service:** 0800 096606, [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk). Open every day 08.30 to 20.30. They will put you in touch with your nearest befriender.
- **Ease Pet Bereavement Service:** 07870 740605. [www.ease-animals.org.uk](http://www.ease-animals.org.uk)
- **Animal Samaritans Pet Bereavement Service:** 0208 303 1859
- **Speaking to a member of our team at Hampton Park Vets**