

# Euthanasia

Euthanasia is a gentle and humane way to say good-bye to a beloved animal who may be suffering from an acute or chronic illness or injury.

**Making the Decision** A dignified, painless passing can be our final gift to a devoted companion. However, euthanasia is undoubtedly the most difficult and heartbreaking decision any pet owner will ever have to make. When is it time to let go? Is there a right time? The decision making process is different for every pet and every owner.

Your veterinarian can examine and evaluate your pet's condition, estimate its chances for recovery, explain medical and surgical options (and associated costs) and discuss potential disabilities, outcomes and long-term problems. If there is any part of the diagnosis or implications for your pet's future that you don't understand, don't hesitate to ask to have it explained again. It may be helpful to follow these steps:

- Collect all pertinent information regarding the illness and treatment options
- Ask about symptoms, how they may progress, and what can be done to manage them to maintain an acceptable quality-of-life
- If prudent, seek a second opinion. More options may become available, or the same diagnosis from another source may affirm you are doing the best
- As a decision-making aid, access the quality-of-life questions found at the links noted in this brochure
- Try not to avoid the inevitable. Rather, think things through to plan for best- and worst-case scenarios.
- Spend more time with your pet! Celebrate life and

the bond you have together. Capture moments and memories in pictures or words as best you can

- Discuss what you would like to do regarding care of remains to be prepared when the time comes.

**Quality Of Life** The following questions can help determine if quality-of-life has been reduced to the point that euthanasia makes sense. Generally, if your pet can no longer experience the things he/she once enjoyed, or appears to be experiencing more pain than pleasure despite best efforts to make them more comfortable, it may be time.

- Does your pet respond to you?
- Is your pet responsive to the environment?
- Are eating and drinking habits normal?
- Is your pet soiling his/her sleeping area?
- Does your pet have limited mobility?
- Is your pet unable to groom himself/herself?
- Is your pet comfortable? In pain? Content?
- Can your pet still experience simple joys?
- Does your pet participate in usual activities?
- What do you think your pet would want?
- Do you have financial resources to provide care?
- Are you keeping your pet alive, more for you or for your pet?
- Access the following QOL questionnaires:
  - i) [www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?A=1523](http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?A=1523)
  - ii) [www.journeypet.com/pet-quality-of-life-scale-calculator/](http://www.journeypet.com/pet-quality-of-life-scale-calculator/)
  - iii) [www.vet.osu.edu/vmc/companion/our-services/honoring-bond-support-animal-owners](http://www.vet.osu.edu/vmc/companion/our-services/honoring-bond-support-animal-owners)

**The Procedure** Knowing what to expect from the procedure may help make the experience just a little easier. The euthanasia process itself is designed

to be as quick and peaceful for you and your animal as possible.

Your pet will be taken to the back treatment area to have a catheter placed in the vein. The vet will then return to the room with your pet. First, an injection is given that quickly causes a deep sleep. Euthanol is then injected intravenously. *Within seconds* of administration, the function of your pet's brain and heart will stop. (It is a painless procedure for them and feels the same as going under general anesthesia.) Your veterinarian will check to see that your pet's heart has stopped and will tell you he or she has passed away. At this time, you are free to spend as much time as needed to say goodbye.

Several things may happen during euthanasia that can be quite disconcerting and/or unpleasant if you don't expect them. Your pet's bladder and bowels may release following death. Some pets have "phantom breaths" or muscle twitches. These are only reflexes. Also, your pet's eyes will not close.

## **You May Be Present for as Much or as Little of the Procedure as you Wish**

You can decide whether or not you wish to remain for the entire procedure, or if you would like other important people in your life to be there with you. How and when you say goodbye is an important and very personal decision. Witnessing the euthanasia of a beloved pet is a very intensely emotional, even traumatic, experience. You may decide to stay and then realize you are unable to. Whatever your initial decision, you have the option to stay or leave at any point. Please know that if you choose not to remain, your pet will not be alone. Veterinary clinic staff will maintain a loving caring presence on your behalf.

**Care of Remains** Prior to euthanasia, you should decide what option for care of remains is the right option for you.

1. You can take your pet home to bury, for which there is no charge. Local law dictates remains must be buried at least 5 feet underground.

2. You can request private cremation where your pet’s ashes will be returned to you. Ashes come back in a “scatter bag.” If you would like an urn, you can order online from the privacy of your own home. Visit our online store and register as a user to see pricing (\$30-\$300 depending on size and style):

<https://coldlakevetclinic.clientvantage.ca/miscurns>

3. Alternately, you can let the clinic take care of remains for you. Our cremation services are provided by Deb Lobe at Primrose Pet Crematorium.

As another memento in addition to or instead of ashes back, you may choose to order a ceramic PawPrint for \$150. Samples can be viewed at [www.peartreeimpressions.com](http://www.peartreeimpressions.com).

**Cost of the Euthanasia Procedure : \$100**

Costs for Care of Remains		
Size of Pet	Private Cremation	Clinic Care Of Remains
Under 30 lbs	\$125	\$45
31 – 77 lbs	\$135	\$75
78 – 110 lbs	\$150	\$75
111-165 lbs	\$190	\$75
Over 165 lbs	\$230	\$75

**Booking the Appointment** We understand what an emotional roller coaster this can be for pet owners. An appointment for euthanasia can generally be fit into our schedule at any time. Once the decision has been made, we don’t want you or your pet to have to wait. We do appreciate that you call to book an appointment prior to coming in so that we can have a room prepared for you.

For the appointment itself: once in the room, we will first have you sign the consent form and settle the bill to get the practicalities out of the way. As mentioned previously, the vet will come into the room to speak with you, and generally take your pet back to the treatment area to place the catheter. The vet will then bring your pet back into the room to administer the sedation and euthanol.

It’s not uncommon for owners to book a euthanasia appointment, but then cancel and reschedule. This is not at all an inconvenience to the clinic, we are more than happy to accommodate your needs and wishes in this regard.

**Cold Lake Veterinary Clinic: 780-594-5212**

*If your pet should happen to take a sudden turn for the worse after-hours, listen to the clinic voicemail message for the cell number of the vet on call.*

**Grief** Goodbyes are always difficult. Many think of bereavement as beginning after loss but for many, the grieving process begins much earlier. Often, it begins the day you realize that your pet is approaching the end of its life – even though the final loss of that pet may still be many months away.

The act of saying goodbye is an important step in managing the natural and healthy feelings of sorrow and loss. A last evening with your pet at home, a special day and meal for your pet, or a visit to the clinic if the pet is being hospitalized – be sure to do whatever feels appropriate to allow each family member to have alone time with your pet.

After the euthanasia, you will probably experience mixed feelings of sadness, guilt, and even anger. Many owners are surprised by the intensity of emotion, even if they’ve previously experienced other forms of loss. Expect that it will take some time to fully accept that your companion is gone, and to adjust to a new life that no longer includes him/her. Realize that everyone in the family will be grieving in their own way. Try to recall and treasure the good times you spent with your pet.

Sometimes well-meaning friends and family may not realize how important your pet was to you, or the intensity of your grief. Comments they make may seem uncaring. Be honest with yourself and others about how you feel, and don’t hesitate to reach out for support. Several pet loss support websites are available online, offering a wealth of helpful literature, support groups and chat rooms.

Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement: [aplb.org](http://aplb.org)

Be prepared that unexpected emotions may flood through you with your next visit to the vet clinic, or upon entering the room where the euthanasia was performed. Don’t be embarrassed if you do get emotional, and don’t hesitate to let the clinic staff know what you are feeling.