



Euthanasia

Euthanasia is often the most emotional and painful decision you make for your pet. And because this decision is so difficult, it can be comforting for you to know what to expect from the procedure and how you can best meet both your and your animal's needs. Knowing what to expect may help make the experience just a little easier.

Where will the euthanasia be performed? Can it be done at my home?

We perform almost all euthanasia procedures here at the hospital. We have a special, more spacious room that we can use for these procedures to make everyone more comfortable, especially for large dogs and their families. The staff will most likely prepare the room with a blanket or two, and attempt to make your pet as at ease as possible. In special circumstances, you may be able to make arrangements with your veterinarian for a home visit for euthanasia; the availability for this depends on the clinic schedule and the feasibility of travel to your home. Please make sure to discuss this ahead of time with your vet, if possible, to find out if this service is viable for you.

What will happen to my pet's body afterwards? How long will it take to get my pet's remains back?

Do you have a special burial spot in mind or would you like your pet cremated? If you would like to have your pet's ashes returned, be sure to request a private cremation. It takes approximately one to two weeks for ashes to be returned. We can also take care of your animal's remains for you if you do not wish to get ashes returned. Remains come back in a small tin; enclosed in this binder are some options for urns and other memorial objects that you can order for your pet. We can answer any questions you have about pricing to help you make a decision. We will also ask you if you wish to have your pet's pawprint made in either ink, clay, or both.

What method do you use to perform the euthanasia?

The euthanasia process itself is designed to be as quick and peaceful for you and your animal as possible. Euthanasia solution is ideally injected intravenously, and is a fast-acting sedative which stops the heart within seconds. This requires the placement of either a catheter or needle directly into the vein. Your veterinarian will test it first, to make sure it is in the vein and that the solution is administered properly. In some instances, it may be appropriate for the vet to administer an additional sedative before the euthanasia solution. If you have any specific questions, please discuss with us how the procedure is performed. Your animal's health, temperament, and your preferences should each be considered when making this decision. Be sure that you are comfortable with the procedure that you and your vet choose.

What can I expect during the euthanasia?

Normally, the procedure goes very smoothly, but be aware that your animal may gasp, have bodily tremors, vocalize, or void urine and/or feces after the heart is stopped. This may be unpleasant, but the reactions are natural – and your pet has already passed on.

Can I be with my pet during the euthanasia? Can I spend some time with him/her after?

Once you know what to expect from the procedure, you can decide whether or not you wish to be present, or if you would like other important people to be with you during that time. How and when you say goodbye is an important and very personal decision. You alone can make the choice to be with your pet until the end; some choose to stay, others place their pet into the care of the veterinary staff for the euthanasia procedure.

Final Thoughts

After you have been through this experience, you probably will experience mixed feelings including sadness, guilt, or even anger. Others may have difficulty understanding your bond with your pet. Know that there is support. The Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement (APLB) has a good website (www.aplb.org) with a wealth of information including helpful literature, local support groups and even a special chat room open several times during the week. Please check the remainder of the binder for more information.

Euthanasia literally means “good death”. Your careful consideration of this process will hopefully make it a little easier on both you and your precious companion.

Adapted from *Preparing Yourself For Your Pet's Euthanasia*, The Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement.