

EUTHANASIA
OR
THE LAST TESTAMENT OF HERALD.COM

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How does one even begin to discuss all the facets of the end of a pet's life? Is now truly the time? Have we waited too long, in constant hope that things will change? Have we done everything possible within reason to avoid this final decision? Maybe that dear old friend has reached his golden years, has looked up to you, and asked for his freedom from the pain, or the ravages of the condition that consumes his pride and life's energy. The illness could even have come on suddenly, become very serious, and leave you no time to prepare, or even think of saying goodbye. There can be so much guilt and sadness when it comes to this.

Each of us deals with, and processes these things in our own way. Our pets become like our children to many of us. In fact they may have grown up right along with our kids, and not only is it hard on us, but especially on the kids. How do we explain to them that little Starr can't be there for them anymore. Losing a pet is one of life's biggest challenges.

Our beloved pets can be given the gift of dignity when we mercifully allow them to pass on peacefully, instead of waiting for nature to take its course. This common decency still remains illegal in humans much to our, and our loved ones soul searching loss. As much as euthanasia (putting to sleep) can be difficult to discuss, I would like to share with you some aspects here so that you can become more aware. When the actual time comes it is often very hard to think with clarity.

When you come in to the office time is scheduled so that there are no interruptions, and that nothing is done in a hurried manner. It is not necessary to stay. Some folks just can't deal with the flood of emotion that comes through them, and that is very understandable. I encourage the family to remain and be a part of this final celebration of their pet's life. Those that do stay have all said that it was a good thing for loved ones to be with them in the end.

In my office there are strict guidelines that I have made for myself, as well as for the good of the animals. It was decided long ago that since I will be the final caregiver I must have it peaceful for myself, my staff, the family, and most of all for the pet. We light candles, turn down the lights, and often play music to soothe the soul. A nice comfie bed is made with blankets, hand made for this purpose. Smudge is burned, which are herbs especially designated for bringing in good, and removing negative energy from the room, and all the participants. It's not about a certain religious practice, but more of an ancient way of making a peaceful experience. If folks want to have a special ceremony of their own I encourage them, and honor their individual ways. We use various calming essential oils in the air, and offer rescue remedy, or homeopathic medicine for grief and loss. This aids the human family to be brave, and transition thru this last moment with their pet. I frequently employ a sedative beforehand so that there is no apprehension or stress of any

kind for the animal. All veterinarians use an intravenous injection of a potent overdose of anesthetic medication, and finally when in a deep peaceful sleep all functions cease. The life slowly slips away. It is painless except for the initial needle entry. A window is left open to the east so that the spirit can leave the room. The open window gives the freedom to be healthy and active again, running and playing in a special place, until we someday will join them again.

Euthanasia is not a service taken lightly by most veterinarians. It is never scheduled unless I have examined the pet, and had a long discussion with the caretaker. Together we have agreed that this is really the best thing to do. In my hospital this is never done for a financial reason, or because it is convenient in some way for the client. It must be the best, and only consideration for the pet's well being.

Mary once mentioned that I should do duty at the shelter for a month because I advocate that pets should be spayed and neutered after six months of age. What she didn't know is that I have done many months of duty there already, and have first hand experience with the loss of hundreds of pets without homes. Euthanasia to me is a sacred and spiritual gift that I give, and must only be used when there are no other viable options. I have lost a few clients because I didn't agree with them that now was the time. I know that this decision must be made by each individual in their own way, and each of us tries to do the best that we can to find a balance. I honor that decision and usually agree, but on a rare occasion I take the right of refusal.

How do we know when it is truly the time? Of course we'd all like to have our pets live to a ripe old age, and then pass on in their sleep, but this rarely happens in the real world. No matter what their age, if there have been sudden life threatening injuries or illness, and there just is no hope, then as hard as that becomes, the decision is often made for us. Chronic illness and decline happens very slowly. People and pets have more cancers these days, and certain breeds are passing on at a much younger age than we would ever expect. Clients often ask me what I would do. Is it really the time? I tell them what I would do, but that this is a very personal decision that must be made by them. It is not up to me to decide. I tell them to use their inner vision. It is that sixth sense that we all have, but do not often use. I tell them to talk to their pet and ask them what "they" want. Often we think so much of ourselves during this difficult time that we neglect the obvious, what the animal wants and needs. How can I talk to my pet? I tell them to look at the eyes.

The eyes are so expressive, and speak from the heart, not the mind. We all have the ability to communicate with our loved ones, and especially when there is a time of need like this. As hard as that decision is, when your pet has told you to let them go, to give them freedom, it will take the load of responsibility off your shoulders. Instead of inner emotional turmoil, there comes instead a peaceful sadness. No one wants to say goodbye, but that is what life is all about. It's about constant change, beginnings and also endings. Like the moon changing with the tides, all that is certain is the love, and the cherished memories. No matter what your belief in the hereafter, just as the sun rises and sets, those memories will always live on.