



Our thoughts are with you,

Each of us has a life journey filled with experiences, both joyful and sad. We are lucky to be blessed to have a wonderful bond with our animals and cannot imagine life without our special friends. With that comes the prospect of helping them through their final stages of life.

Processing decisions involved in supporting our beloved companions toward their end stages of life can be difficult and exhausting. It is our hope that by providing the following materials we are able to assist you in coping with the decisions that will need to be made as well as the emotions of grief.

We are here for you. Whether it is answering questions, assisting you in making decisions or lending a supportive ear, we want you to lean on us. You are not alone in this, please let us know how we can best support you.

Your caring Animal Care Clinic Family

Tools To Aid In Determining Quality Of Life

This Quality of Life Scale can help in understanding the undulating progression of your pet's quality of life.

HURT – Adequate pain control & breathing ability is of top concern. Trouble breathing outweighs all concerns. Is the pet's pain well managed? Can the pet breathe properly? Is oxygen supplementation necessary?

HUNGER – Is the pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the pet need a feeding tube?

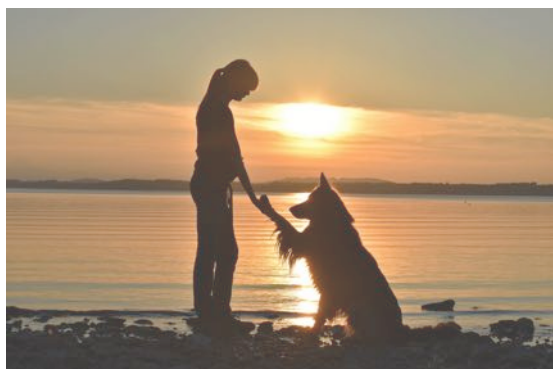
HYDRATION – Is the pet dehydrated? For patients not drinking enough water, use subcutaneous fluids daily or twice daily to supplement fluid intake.

HYGIENE – The pet should be brushed and cleaned, particularly after eliminations. Avoid pressure sores with soft bedding and keep all wounds clean

HAPPINESS – Does the pet express joy and interest? Is the pet responsive to family, toys, etc.? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored or afraid? Can the pet's bed be moved to be close to family activities?

MOBILITY – Can the pet get up without assistance? Does the pet need human or mechanical help (e.g., a cart)? Does the pet feel like going for a walk? Is the pet having seizures or stumbling? (Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, but an animal with limited mobility yet still alert, happy and responsive can have a good quality of life as long as caregivers are committed to helping their pet.)

MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD – Take notice of when the bad days outnumber the good, and quality of life may be compromised. When a healthy human-animal bond is no longer possible, the family must begin to prepare themselves for the end. The decision for euthanasia can be the best decision if the pet is suffering, though death may also come peacefully and painlessly at home.



There are many online resources available for monitoring your pet. We have found that the mobile app 'Grey Muzzle' is well designed and user friendly. By doing a Google search for 'Quality of Life Scale for Pets' you will find an array of websites to find what will work best for you.

Pet Quality of Life Scale

Directions: Use the key factors from the quality of life scale below to help assess your pet's condition. Use the Daily Diary to keep track of your pet's progress. Fill in the appropriate number for each category and then add the numbers from each category for that day. The maximum score is 12 or you can determine your own scale. You can even add categories that pertain to your pet's particular situation. For example, 'Respiratory Rate' if your pet suffers from heart failure or lung cancer. You can give half or quarter points if appropriate.

MOBILITY

- 2 Good Mobility** – No difficulty getting around, enjoys walks and going outside
- 1 Poor Mobility** – Difficulty getting up, hard to get in position to eliminate, short walks only
- 0 Bare Minimum Mobility** – Needs assistance, pain medication/anti-inflammatory medications do not help.

NUTRITION

- 2 Good Appetite**
- 1 Poor Appetite** – Hand feeding, needs enticing
- 0 No Appetite**

HYDRATION

- 2 Adequate intake**
- 1 Poor intake/** or increased in some patients with particular diseases
- 0 Requires Clysis** (subcutaneous fluids)

INTERACTION/ATTITUDE

- 2 Interacts normally** with family and other pets
- 1 Some interaction** with family and other pets
- 0 Hides** in the closet or under the bed

ELIMINATION

- 2 Normal** urination and/or defecation
- 1 Reduced/irregular** urination and/or defecation
- 0 No Elimination**

FAVORITE THINGS

- 2 Normal** favorite activities, hobbies, etc
- 1 Decrease** in doing their favorite things
- 0 No interest** in their favorite things

Example Scale is as follows

- 12 – 9** Everything is okay
- 6 – 8** Requires intervention
- < or = 5** Consider humane tranquilization & euthanasia



Daily Diary

Date	Mobility	Nutrition	Hydration	Interaction/ Attitude	Elimination	Favorite Things	Total & Daily Notes



Daily Diary

Date	Mobility	Nutrition	Hydration	Interaction/ Attitude	Elimination	Favorite Things	Total & Daily Notes

Expectations And Caring For Our Aging Pets

The aging process for our furry companions is similar to that of our human companions, though of course has a more rapid onset. Many people have not experienced being a part of an aging family member's decline so we are here to offer guidance for assessing changes in demeanor and routine and how to best support our pets.



SLEEP

Your pet may begin to sleep more than usual, sometimes vocalizing during a deep sleep. This is normal and represents a type of dream state. Some animals may even seem to spend most of their time asleep as they age. As long as they are fully awake when they are awake, lots of sleeping is no worry.



Many older pets also have decreased hearing and are not easily aroused from sleep. While sleeping some pets may exhibit decreased bladder control and you may find wet bedding more often. Allowing them to go out to potty often so the bladder is not as full can help reduce accidents. Our doctors also may be able to help.

APPETITE

As we age our interest in food also changes. Many pets eat less and this can be upsetting to pet parents. As long as your pet is not losing weight, a decreased level of excitement over food is not a worry unless they are not eating at all or the poor appetite is combined with vomiting, diarrhea, sluggishness or other signs.

Offering smaller meals several times a day can be helpful. Pets with missing teeth may benefit from softer foods, wetting kibble with hot water or adding canned food may make eating easier. Warming food is also an option to entice poor eaters. Appetite stimulants can be prescribed for extreme inappetence. Feeding location may need adjustment; older cats may no longer be able to jump up to elevated feeding stations while large dogs may benefit from slightly raised feeding dishes.

DRINKING

While appetite may decrease, thirst and water intake frequently increase. Fresh water should always remain available, however increases in water intake and urine output should be monitored with the assistance of your veterinarian. Increased water intake and urination can be a sign of many diseases associated with aging, so be sure to report this to ACC if it occurs. As is true with food bowls, be sure water bowls are accessible (raised for dogs and not on elevated surfaces for cats who can no longer jump up)

ELIMINATION ROUTINES

Elimination routines often begin to change with age. Holding bladder and bowels for long periods of time become difficult and your pet may need more frequent potty calls. Some older pets with arthritis issues will have trouble accessing potty areas. Cats may not be able to get into a litter box with taller sides. Dogs may not be able to navigate a dog door or even the stairs to the backyard. Keep these concepts in mind and adjust the environment when you can. Low sided litter boxes, ramps and perhaps leaving a door to the backyard open most of the time can be beneficial.

Bowel constitution may also change. Diarrhea and constipation can become more common and loss of mobility for your pet may lead to messy situations. Many older pets do not realize the need to “go” until it is too late and thus accidents may become more frequent. The doctors at ACC can help with both diarrhea and constipation and will likely recommend probiotics. Still, we find most older pets will have accidents from time to time. You can prepare for this by having washable rugs and towels in place where your pet likes to hang out.

MOBILITY

Decrease in locomotion is one of the most frustrating changes for both you and your older pet. Difficulty in rising could be due to discomfort or to neurological changes that cause weakness but are not painful. Stairs and access to elevated surfaces (the couch, a favorite chair or a cat’s tree) can become problematic. Perhaps the biggest issue for an older dog’s loss of mobility is slippery floors. As we move away from carpet in our homes this is becoming a bigger problem.





Set your home up for success. Place non-slip mats or yoga mats everywhere you pets walk. Dogs may need full pathways developed throughout the house. Non-slip underlayment can be added to prevent area rugs from slipping. Be sure cats are able to have good purchase on their favorite resting places as well as the surfaces they use to climb up to their resting spots. Place dog beds on top of non-slip mats so there is an overlap – make those first few steps are stable! Be sure all of the mats and rugs you use are easily washable. We want to be confident our elderly dogs and cats have a soft, warm resting area that they can easily get into and out of.

There are a variety of therapies and prescription medications available to alleviate pain and give your pet increased freedom of movement. There are also a number of excellent harnesses and slings on the market that can be utilized to make stairways safer for your pet to navigate with your assistance. If necessary, we can help with wheels, orthotics and other devices to aid in mobility.

OTHER

Other bodily changes common in our older pets include the emergence of new lumps, bumps and wart growths. New growths should be monitored by you and your veterinarian to ensure they do not interfere with your pet's overall comfort and movement. Do not be surprised to also see changes in muscle mass. It is not unusual for elderly dogs and cats to become thinner in their hindquarters and even a bit wobbly. Once sleek fur may become dull or greasy in appearance. Cats are fastidious groomers though as they age this becomes more difficult for them. Regular brushing will help keep coats from matting, allow you to monitor those lumps and bumps, and maintain the bond with your senior pet.

Cataracts, dry eye and poor vision are also part of the aging process. We can discuss the options for eye care including referral to a local veterinary ophthalmologist if that is your desire. Many pets adjust well to decreased vision especially when home and yard decor remain consistent. The addition of a radio playing or sound of a water fixture can assist your pet with their orientation in your home and yard. Inexpensive baby gates can be used at the bottom or top of stairs to keep your pet from falls.

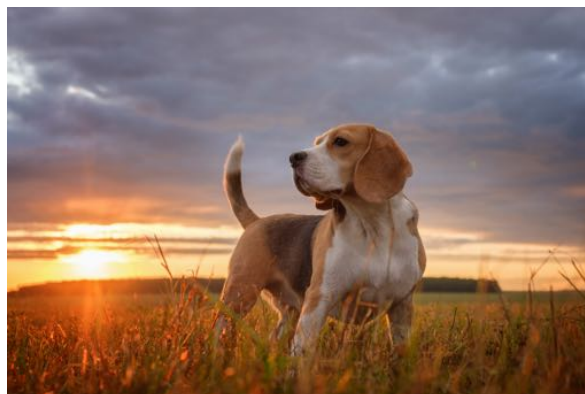


Cognitive changes can result in new vocalizations, pacing and circling, or staring off into space. Your best friend may have episodes of impaired cognitive function that seem to come and go.

Being patient with your pet and keeping routines is important for both of you.

When you are ready to schedule . . .

- Appointments can be made the day of or in advance, we will work to accommodate your needs when scheduling as best we can.
 - For some, the option to say good-bye at home is best. Please reach out to our office for details on with whom this service can be scheduled.
- We will offer to take a credit card number over the phone to allow your family to exit out a side door after your appointment.
- If you have decided on the choice of aftercare we will take note at the time of scheduling, this decision can also be made when you are here for your appointment
 - Certain items like choice of urn or other memorial items can be added after you leave the clinic, please reach out with those changes or additions to see if that is possible
- Feel free to bring family, 2 leg and 4 leg members, to be a part of the process. We can comfortably accommodate 4-5 people with 1-2 additional pets
- The space used for your appointment is yours for the time you need and you are welcome to bring items of comfort from home like bedding and toys.



After good bye . . .

Deciding on Aftercare

We work with Eden Memorial and Central Coast Pet Aquamation for after life care.

- Cremation
- Aquamation
- Burial
 - List of California Pet Cemeteries attached
 - Home burial may be an option, please check your local laws for restrictions

Options for service

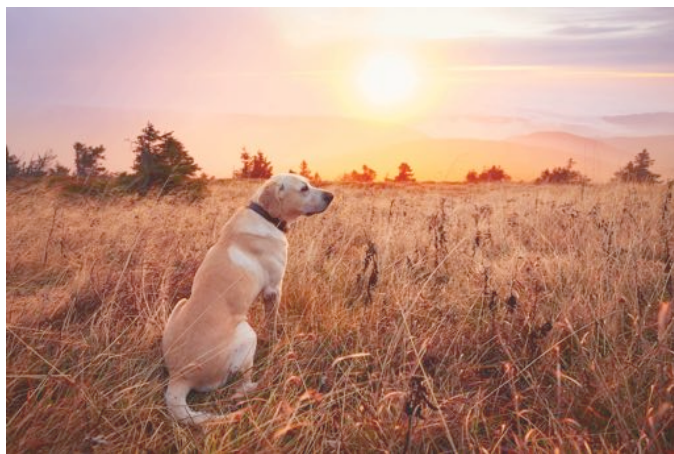
- Aquamation: remains are processed by an natural chemical decomposition process using water flow, temperature and alkalinity
- Cremation: remains are processed by fire
 - **Communal**: ashes will be scattered over a private vineyard or orchard
 - **Private**: ashes will be returned to the owner

Eden Memorial picks up and drops off on Thursday, the process typically takes 10-20 days and we will call you when your pet's ashes have been returned.

After Care Options

The death of a pet brings with it yet another difficult decision, and one which you may not be prepared for in the moment of loss to deal with. That is the decision of how to handle your pet's remains. Before you make any decision about how to handle the remains of a pet, make sure that you have considered the feelings, beliefs and needs of all family members.

Home Burial can provide a way to celebrate your pet's life with a funeral and memorial service, which in itself can be powerful coping tools. Home burial provides the opportunity to create a permanent memorial to one's pet—a grave marker, a statue, or perhaps a tree planted over the pet's grave to serve as a living memorial. In some circumstances, however, home burial may not be an appropriate option. The most obvious is if you have no place in which to bury a pet. You must also be sure that a grave is deep enough to ensure that your pet's remains will not be disturbed or become a health hazard.



Many cities prohibit home burials. You also might not wish to bury a pet at home if you rent, or if you are likely to move away from the property.

If your pet is to pass away peacefully at home and it is normal business hours for Animal Care Clinic please call us so we can help facilitate the after life process for your pet.

If our clinic is closed please reach out to the nearest animal hospital that is open and they will be able to help assist you.

If you know there are not local restrictions regarding pet burial you can choose to bury your pet at home

Cemetery Burial You'll find pet cemeteries in nearly every state, burial in a pet cemetery also ensures that your pet's remains will remain undisturbed and cared for. You will not have to worry about what will happen to your pet if you have to leave the property on which it is buried; it will be cared for, no matter where you go or what happens to you. Cemetery burial can be a costly option, but many find it a comforting, secure way to handle a pet's remains.

California Pet Cemeteries

PET'S REST

LOVED PETS MONTEREY BAY

885 Strawberry Rd.
Royal Oaks
(831) 722-8722

1905 Hillside Blvd.
Colma, CA (SF Bay Area)
(650) 775-2201

FRANKLIN PET CEMETARY

2405 Ashby Rd.
Merced
(209) 383-4582

MY PET'S CEMETARY

430 Magnolia Ave.
Petaluma
(707) 762-6743

LOS ANGELES PET MEMORIAL PARK

5068 Old Scandia Ln.
Calabasas
(818) 591-7037

SEA BREEZE PET MEMORIAL PARK

19542 Beach Blvd.
Huntington Beach
(714) 962-7111

FRESNO PET CEMETARY

1501 W. Nielsen Ave.
Fresno
(559) 266-6753

Cremation If you would like to keep your pet's remains with you, consider having your pet's remains cremated and returned to you. During the cremation process the pet is respectfully placed in the cremation chamber and heated to 1800 degrees Fahrenheit, reducing the organic matter to dust and dried bones. Finally, the cremains are ground to a coarse sand-like powder. Some choose to scatter the ashes in the pet's own yard, where it lived and played; this is another way of bringing the pet "home" one last time. Others choose to scatter the ashes in a way that symbolizes setting the pet "free" for its final journey—such as in the woods or over a body of water, or just into the wind.



There are many different types of memorials or keepsakes meant to contain a small amount of ashes you can purchase to keep your pet close. At Animal Care Clinic we work with Eden Memorial, who's website offers a selection of memorials you can choose from as well as other helpful



resources. Eden also provides an option for those that do not wish to have their pet's ashes returned, pet's ashes can be scattered over a private vineyard that has partnered with Eden to provide a safe place to memorialize your loved one.

Aquamation, also referred to as Alkaline Hydrolysis or water cremation, is considered a greener more natural option with no greenhouse gasses emitted. The byproducts from this non-toxic process can then be safely put back into the environment. Aquamation uses water flow, temperature and alkalinity to



naturally decompose organic matter with the bones remaining. Unlike cremation, aquamated remains have gone through a more gentle decomposition and contain no black, carbonized ash. In a sense, Aquamation is the opposite of burning by fire. Burning is an oxidative process where alkaline hydrolysis is a reductive process. For

more information please feel free to ask our staff at the clinic or visit www.centralcoastpetaquamation.com for details.

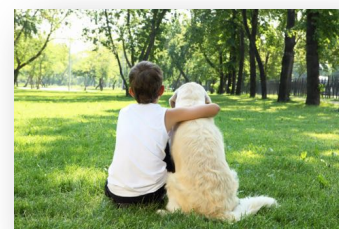


Euthanasia at Animal Care Clinic What to Expect

Our goal at Animal Care Clinic is to make the passing of our patients as easy, painless and dignified as possible for both the pet and their family. We do our best to accommodate your needs within the practice of excellent medicine. Here is what you can expect when coming in to ACC for euthanasia:

Making the Appointment

Very few people want to make an appointment for euthanasia. Most families are not sure when the right time for the euthanasia will be until it presents itself – often rather suddenly. Therefore, we are always ready to accommodate you. When you know the time is right, call us and we will be sure to make time for you that day.



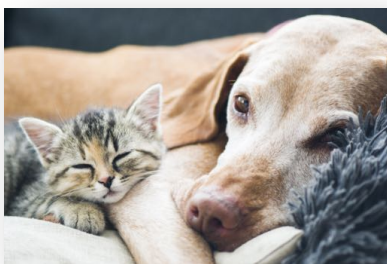
When you arrive

If we know you are coming, we will be ready for you when you arrive. Your entire family and pets will be escorted into our comfort room. We can easily handle 4-5 people and an additional pet or two in this room. This will be your space before, during and after the process of euthanasia. There is a small couch, several chairs and a floor rug. Dog beds and non-slip mats can be used as needed. You are welcome to bring your pet's own bed and belongings to make them feel more at home.

What will happen next?

A veterinary nurse and/or veterinarian will meet with you in the consult room. They will talk with you about your decision to euthanize if needed and can help you with decisions on aftercare if they have not been made yet. They will also review what will be happening during the euthanasia process.

In almost all cases, we will place an IV catheter to ease the injection process. Some animals will do best if they are sedated before this is done. In that case, we will likely administer the sedative and give you 10-15 minutes alone with your pet while it takes time to work. Once your pet is ready for the catheter, we can place the catheter in the comfort room with you or we can take your pet to our treatment area that has better lighting. This decision is based on your comfort level with medical procedures and our needs to make this process go as easily for your pet as possible.



Once the catheter is placed, we can start the euthanasia process. You will always be asked if you are ready before we begin any injections.

Children & Pet Loss



As in all things related to dealing with grief in the family, communication is key. It's a good idea not to make assumptions about what your child does or does not understand, or what beliefs your child may hold.

The loss of a family pet may be a child's first encounter with death, so a parent that is faced not only with trying to soothe the child's grief over the disappearance of a friend, but with trying to explain the concept of death.

By talking to your child openly and honestly (which means sharing your own feelings), you may find that the child understands death far better than you anticipated, or you may be able to uncover some misconceptions that you now have an opportunity to put right.

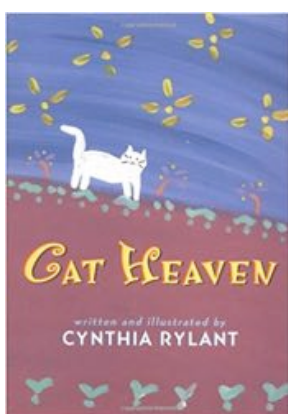
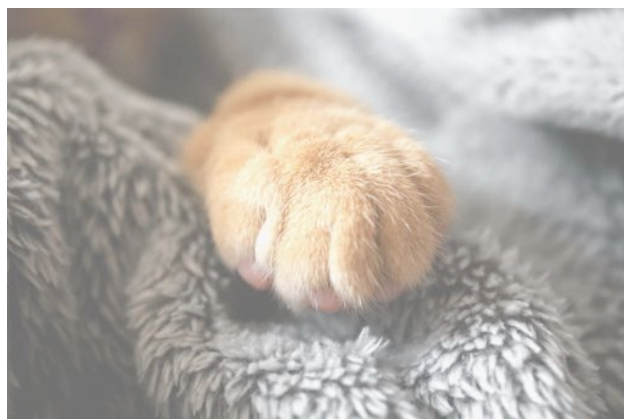
You can serve your children best by being as honest as possible about the death of the pet, or about an illness that will eventually lead to death. Honesty and openness will pave the way to coping and will enable you and your children to have discussions about your feelings. If you fail to be open, your children may hear things from other sources that give them confused ideas about what has happened, and without communication you'll have no opportunity to learn what these ideas are or how to counteract them.



Counselor Diane Matheny has suggestions for helping younger children cope with the loss of a pet

"I find it helpful to have them tell me where they think their pet is now. I encourage them to describe the setting, the other animals or people they believe would be there, and what their pet does for fun. Through this creative exercise, I can find out if there are aspects of death that are frightening to the child, and address them. I am comfortable telling children that no one knows for sure where we go when we die. Honesty is essential when dealing with children, and since we don't know exactly where we go when we die, it is important to tell them that, too. When the family has a spiritual or religious background, I integrate these beliefs in the exercise. Generally, once a child has visualized where the pet might be, feels sure that the pet's needs are met, and realizes that the pet will not awaken in its grave, they can move on to the acceptance stage of grieving."

Some people say that one should never use the term "went to sleep" in connection with death. A child may develop a fear of going to sleep because he is afraid that, like Fido, he won't wake up. They also argue that if you say that the pet was so sick or so badly injured that it went to sleep or went to heaven, the child may fear that this may happen to them if they become sick or injured. If your pet is sick and you know that they will pass in the near future, you will do your child more good by preparing them for this inevitable tragedy than by trying to conceal the pet's condition. This way, your child will be able to observe the pet's illness and develop a better understanding of the dying process.



Dog Heaven & Cat Heaven

By Cynthia Rylant

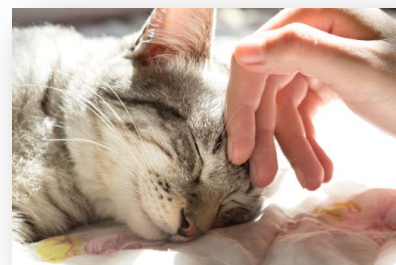
In Newbery Medalist Cynthia Rylant's classic bestseller, the author comforts readers young and old who have lost a dog, as she did for cats in the bestselling companion book, CAT HEAVEN. Recommended highly by pet lovers around the world.

Excerpts from *Coping with Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet* Copyright © 2007 by Moira Allen.

Many patients will get two injections. The first is a sedative/anesthetic that will leave your pet unconscious, so they will not experience the actual death. You may see saline injected also to flush out the catheter. The second injection will be the euthanasia solution – this is either a pink or blue color. This will lead to very rapid cessation of cardiac and pulmonary function (heart and lungs) and then brain death. Death often occurs before we are even done administering the injection. The doctor will listen to your pet's heart and lungs to ensure that death has ensued and will tell you that your pet has died.

What happens when they die?

Death is quite rapid with our euthanasia process. You will see and feel your pet fully relax. Eyes may remain open or they may close. Sometimes pets urinate or defecate – they are not aware of this. Pets with respiratory disease may have fluid or even blood come out of their nose or mouth – this is not common. On occasion an animal will take a deep breath, move a limb or their head a bit, twitch or even stretch out their entire body. This is all normal and completely unconscious. Most pets make no movements at all and simply stop breathing.



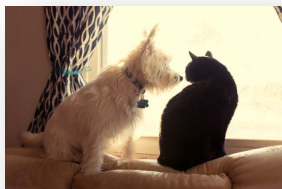
After your pet has died

You are welcome to stay with your pet as long as you like to say good-bye. We can help you to make paw print impressions in clay, collect a lock of hair or keep the collar. When you are ready you may either leave the room through the private back door with your pet comfortably in our care, or have us take your pet's body away for processing before you leave the room. If you will be taking your pet home for burial, we will offer to place him/her into an appropriate carrier for your transportation and help you get the body to your car. We recommend that you bring a friend along to drive you home after the euthanasia.

Then what?

Paying for services can be awkward. In most cases we will send a bill to you so you do not need to deal with money on the day of euthanasia. Some people prefer to prepay so they do not relive the experience when they receive the bill.

If you have asked for cremation or aquamation services, we will manage all aspects of that process for you. You can expect a call from us in 10-20 days to let you know that we have the remains ready for pick up. They will be in a relatively small box that you can pick up at ACC.



If you or any member of your family is having a hard time with grief, we have many resources to help you. Please contact us for this information.

Memorializing a Pet

Remembering the good times that you shared with that pet can help counteract the guilt and grief that comes with loss. Creating a special memorial you may visit can be an effective tool to help you cope with grief (though it may certainly produce a few tears in the process!). It will also provide you with a loving reminder of that pet in the years to come.

- Save a lock of hair or clay impression of your pet's paw
- Develop a photo tribute, create a scrapbook, upload a selection of photos and videos to a CD or website to view
- Have a portrait painted, many artists will list their services in pet magazines or can be found when searching the internet for 'Pet Portraits'
- Create a written or crafted tribute. Create something with your hands that lets you express your feelings
- Plant a tree. A company named Treegivers offers to plant a tree in your pet's name, in the state of your choice. Or you can plant a tree or special plant in your own garden in remembrance.
- Make a donation in your pet's name to an animal welfare organization.



Pet Loss Support Group Hosted by Hospice SLO

Meetings the last Wednesday of each month from 5:00 to 6:15PM

Dorothy D. Rupe Center
1304 Pacific Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

If interested in joining a Support Group at our Paso Robles Office, please call 805.544.2266

Hospice SLO also hosts regular General Grief Support Groups, for additional information please visit hospiceslo.org/support-groups for details

Pet Peace of Mind Program

Helping Pet Owners going through Hospice and Palliative Care Keep Their Pets

Some patients are fortunate enough to have a broad support network and receive all the assistance they need. Unfortunately, as some families deal with grief and loss surrounding the patient's illness, beloved pets may be overlooked or treated as an afterthought by family members who are unfamiliar with the patient's bond with a pet. Pet Peace of Mind provides the solution to this challenging situation. Our program helps local hospice and palliative care organizations meet the needs of their patients with pets.



For more information call Hospice SLO (805) 544-2266

Pet Loss Hotlines

When grieving the loss of your pet you don't have to be alone. The loss of a beloved pet is often difficult. You can always speak with someone who understands the depth of your loss.

ASPCA (877) GRIEF-10 operated from 12:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. daily.

Lap of Love (855) 955-5683 operated from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Utah State University School of Veterinary Medicine

Pet Loss Hotline: (435) 757-4540 or email to petloss@usu.edu.

Phone is staffed Monday-Thursday, 5-7 p.m., and emailed questions and concerns may be sent at any time.

College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University

Pet Loss Hotline: (866) 266-8635 to reach out to someone who can help. You can also find some great resources by visiting www.vetmed.wsu.edu/outreach/pet-loss-hotline/issues-to-explore

University associated Pet Loss Hotlines are staffed by students who have been trained by a licensed psychologist in counseling people who have lost their pets.

Ten Ways to Cope with Grief

1) Eat something. You may not feel hungry, but food is important. Grief burns a lot of energy; you need fuel. Eat something that makes you feel good—and if that happens to be a huge slice of chocolate cake, well, this is no time to worry about your diet. If you can't face a full meal, nibble. Eat now, whether you want to or not.

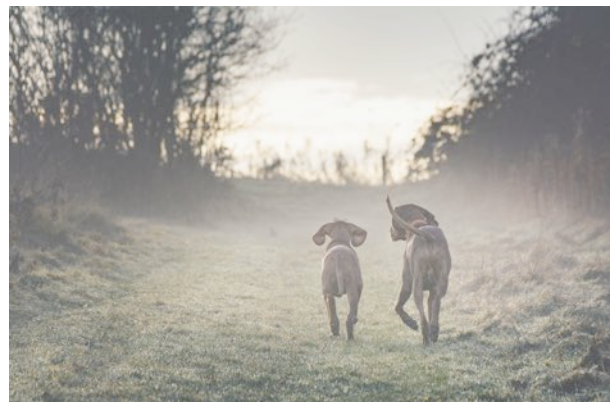
2) Cry. Cry as much as you want to, whenever you feel like it. Take the day off from work. If you can spend even one day crying whenever you need to, it may make it much easier to face the next day.

3) Find something to do. This may seem trite, but focusing on a task really does help. Finding a project to complete, a task to accomplish, helps you focus on the world (and the “you”) that exists outside your grief. It won't make your grief go away, it simply helps you adjust your perception, to recognize that whilst grief is part of your life, it isn't the sum total of your life.

4) Count your blessings. When you lose a loved one, it's hard to focus on anything positive. Unless your circumstances are truly dreadful, however, chances are that your pet was not the only good thing in your life. Remind yourself of some of the good things that you still have by deliberately reviewing a list of your “blessings”—such as your family, your remaining pets, your friends, your interests. Review them in your head, or write them down. Again, these don't fill the hole—but they do remind you that there is a world outside that hole, and that you are still part of it.

5) Reflect on things that don't involve your pet. The loss of your pet may seem to touch every aspect of your life, but try to remember, it hasn't changed everything. Reflect on the things it hasn't changed—the things that you did and enjoyed without your pet. Focus on those things that your pet didn't “touch” while it was alive—and you'll be reminded of the things that haven't really been “touched” by its death.

6) Cuddle something furry. If you have another pet, give it some extra cuddle time. Even though part of your mind is thinking that this isn't the pet you want to cuddle, it's still warm and furry. Your other pet may be very confused and concerned right now since they are missing their mate and it may bring them comfort as well as yourself. If you don't have another pet curl up in bed with a stuffed animal and a heating pad; it's better than lying in the dark wishing you had something furry to be with.



7) Avoid irrevocable decisions. Don't do anything you can't undo. For example, if you can't stand the sight of your pet's toys, don't throw them away—put them out of sight. A week or a month from now, you may wish you had them again, perhaps to incorporate into a memorial, and you'll bitterly regret any hasty actions that can't be undone. Similarly, don't rush out and get a new pet until you've had time to think.

8) Replace negative imagery. The last moments of your pet's life can become a powerful image—whether you witnessed it or not. To be sure that image doesn't overwhelm your positive memories, start working on replacing it with something more pleasant. If you believe that pets go on to an afterlife, for example, try replacing the image of the “last” moment of your pet's life with the “next” moment: The moment it arrives, healthy and whole, on the other side. What happens then? Who greets it? What does it do? Fill your mind with “the moment after.” If you don't believe in an afterlife, concentrate on the special things you did for your pet to make this life a blessing for it.

9) Be honest with yourself. You've been wounded, and you're hurting. You're not weak, crazy, or overly sentimental to feel this way. Even if you have to put on a “brave face” for the rest of the world, don't try to fool yourself into thinking that you're not really in all that much pain. If you cut your hand off, it wouldn't help to get angry with yourself for bleeding—and losing your pet is a lot like losing a part of yourself. It will hurt and it will take time to heal.

10) Make a decision to work through grief. You've heard the saying, “Time heals all wounds.” That isn't true. Time doesn't heal all physical wounds (try cutting off your hand and just ignoring it!) -- and it doesn't heal all emotional wounds.

Grief is normal, but it is also seductive. It's very tempting to let it “take over.” Before you do, think about how you feel today and ask yourself if you want to feel exactly the same way in six months, or a year. Notice that I'm not asking you to decide how you want to feel today. Today, you may not have much choice—any more than you could choose not to feel pain if you were physically injured. Your decision about how to *manage* that injury, however, would be crucial in determining whether a year from now, you are healed—or crippled.

The same is true of grief. You can't control whether or not you grieve. But you can decide whether or not to let that grief control *you*. And these ten “survival steps” are a good way to ensure that it doesn't!