



## **Euthanasia – how do you know the time is right**

The word euthanasia comes from the Greek for "a gentle death." Veterinary surgeons feel that being able to alleviate pain and suffering, and allow an animal to die quickly and painlessly is a very important part of our work. We feel that it is often the last thing you can do for your pet, and demonstrates just how much you love them.

Understandably it is an extremely emotional time for the owner, and often for the vet. It is never easy to make the decision to let go, and we will help guide you. We are often asked 'how will we know when the time is right?' we usually find that owners just know, but if you are considering euthanasia then these questions may help you make your decision.

### **Is your pet:**

- In pain, distress or serious discomfort which cannot be controlled by medicine or other methods?
- Suffering from tumours which are causing pain or discomfort and which are untreatable?
- Having trouble breathing?
- Finding walking and/or balancing difficult?
- Unable to eat and drink enough (without being sick)?
- Soiling in the house or their bed, or having difficulty going to the toilet?
- Acting abnormally, and/or in a confused manner?
- Showing signs of aggression which they have never shown before?
- Having more 'bad days' than 'good days'?
- No longer enjoying life?

And, are you struggling to cope physically and/or emotionally with the needs of your pet?

If, when you answer these questions honestly, the answer to any of them is yes, then euthanasia may be the best option for your pet.

Please remember we are here to help you with any questions or queries you may have, and will aim to help you make the right decision at the right time for both you and your pet.

## **Coping with the sudden loss of your pet**

Sometimes the death of a pet can be very sudden for example as the result of an accident or sudden illness. This often does not give you time to come to terms with what has happened and it can take several days for it to sink in. People often feel guilty or angry at this time, this is completely normal and can

take a few days to a few weeks to pass. It is important to remember that you have lost a family member, all be it a furred or feathered one.

Children can also be distressed by the sudden loss of a pet, it can make them question what happens when someone, or something dies and occasionally can make them concerned they may also lose other family members.

We will offer you the opportunity to say goodbye if at all possible, and most people find this helps although it is understandably very difficult. It often helps people come to terms with their loss and helps to start the grieving process. We think it is important to accept that the grieving process is normal, and necessary, and that the emotions we feel are very individual to ourselves meaning that not all family members will feel the same at the same time.

If you are struggling with the emotions you, or other family members are experiencing then the blue cross have a telephone helpline manned by trained volunteers, it is open from 8.30am – 8.30pm every day. The calls are free and confidential from a landline, although some mobile networks may charge. This is not a counselling service, but a service offering emotional support and information for pet owners who have lost a pet.

Blue Cross bereavement support line 0800 096 6606

They also offer support through an email support line at [pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk) They will answer emails within 48 hrs.

The blue cross also has a series of information leaflets available for download from <https://www.bluecross.org.uk/download-our-pbss-literature>

The NHS have some free support leaflets downloadable from <http://www.nhw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/>