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A DIGNIFIED  
GOODBYE

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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.

We have put together some information in this leaflet to help answer some questions you may have now that you have made the brave decision to help your beloved pet into their final sleep.

One of the ways we can help to minimise the stress and distress associated with euthanasia is to inform yourself about what is involved, and to support you whilst you make the final decisions regarding your pet's care.

Our entire team recognises how difficult the decision to euthanise your pet is to make, and that you are likely to be experiencing some very difficult emotions during this period. We know that by ‘doing the right thing’ for your friend you are choosing to unselfishly accept the distress, grief and suffering that your decision will bring.

We promise to help you say a dignified, respectful, peaceful and comfortable goodbye to your cherished companion.

#### **WHERE?:**

It is possible for us to visit you and your beloved companion at your own home should you so wish. For some it is a comfort knowing that their pet passed away in their own home, surrounded by their family.

For others, the constant reminder associated with their friend being euthanised in their own home is too difficult to bear and they choose to bring their companion to us at our practice.

It is important that you make the right decision for you and your pet.

#### **WHEN?:**

Should you opt to visit our practice for your pet's final goodbye then we will aim to arrange an appointment at a quiet time of the day where possible, and where convenient for you.

If you would like us to visit you at home it may be that we are restricted on the times we are able to visit, and so we ask you to give us as much notice as you can. We do understand that this is not always possible. We will do what we can to accommodate your request regarding timings, although this may not always be possible.

#### **SHOULD YOU STAY WITH YOUR PET?**

There is no right or wrong answer to this question. Some owners choose to stay with their pets, whilst others know that they will be unable to cope emotionally with the euthanasia process. It is important that you do the right thing for you and your pet.

Please ask our team any questions that you want to regarding what to expect, to help you come to this decision.

Please remember that if you choose to stay with your pet, but feel the need to leave during the procedure you are at liberty to do so.

It does help your pet to try to stay as calm as possible whilst they are awake, as they know you very well and are much better at interpreting body language than we are. They will be aware if you are upset and this can upset them to.

If you choose not to stay with your pet, please be assured that we will provide lots of cuddles and reassurance throughout the procedure.

### **CONSENT:**

Although it may seem unnecessary we have to ask you, or someone who is acting on your behalf (and is over the age of 18), to sign a consent form which gives us permission to euthanise your pet. This is a legal requirement. Our vets will talk you through the form before you are asked to sign it.

### **AFTERCARE:**

There are many options available to you following the death of your pet. It is often easier to consider which you would prefer before you say your final goodbyes.

We can clip a portion of your pet's hair for you if you would like to keep some as a keepsake.

### **CREMATION:**

We work with a crematorium based in Rossendale, which both Lloyd and Caroline have visited. This is the crematorium that the My Pets Vets team entrust their pets to when the time comes.

### **INDIVIDUAL CREMATION:**

This options ensures that your pet is cremated on their own, and that if you so choose you can have your pet's ashes back in a variety of different ways, for example in a casket, or to scatter somewhere that means a lot to you both. We are 100% confident that your pet will be cremated on their own, and that the ashes you receive (should you choose to) will be those of your pet only.

This option is more expensive than the alternative cremation option.

### **COMMUNAL CREMATION:**

This option sees your pet being cremated with other pets. We trust the crematorium to treat your pet with the respect they deserve at all times. A portion of the ashes from communal cremation are scatter on the crematoriums beautiful grounds which you can arrange to visit if you wish.

### **BURIAL:**

This is the other option available to you should you choose not to have your pet cremated. It is possible for you to take your friend back home for burial.

### **HOME BURIAL:**

If you choose this option then it is important to ensure that the grave is sufficiently deep, (the recommendation is 1.25metres deep). It is also important to try to ensure your pet's body cannot be uncovered accidentally, this can be possible by covering the grave site with rocks or stones for example. It goes without saying that should your pet's body be uncovered it can be very distressing for you, and it is also worth remembering that the drugs used to euthanase your pet can be harmful to any other animal which ingests it. Other things to ensure whilst digging your pet's grave are that you avoid electricity cables, water pipes or water courses.

We would also recommend that you bury your pet in a blanket or favourite bed rather than a plastic bag or shroud as these are not usually biodegradable.

It's worth considering if you are likely to move home when deciding if a home burial is the right option for your pet.

### **BURIAL IN A FAVOURITE PLACE:**

Should you wish to bury your friend in a well-loved place that does not belong to you it is important that you first obtain permission from the land owners. We would advise you cover the burial site with rocks or stones to prevent it being accidentally uncovered.

### **BURIAL AT A PET CEMETERY:**

It may be possible to arrange for your pet to be buried at a pet cemetery. This option will mean that you do not need to prepare your pet's grave yourself, and that it will be well tended in the future.

### **THE EUTHANASIA PROCESS AT THE PRACTICE:**

Should you choose to bring your beloved friend into the practice then we will organise an appointment for you at a quiet time of the day. When you arrive, we will invite you and your companion into one of our consultation rooms, avoiding the need for you to wait in the waiting area. You may decide you want to bring in your pet's favourite bed or blanket, and we can arrange for them to settle on this in our room.

One of our vets will introduce themselves to you and your faithful friend, and will talk you through the consent form that you will be required to sign, as well as what to expect and your decisions regarding the aftercare of your pet.

Once this has been done and your pet is settled the vet will clip a small area on one of their legs. Sometimes the vet will place an intravenous cannula (a small plastic tube) into your pet's vein, and sometimes they will choose not to – they will discuss their decision with you, and you should be aware that you can ask any question that you want to at this time.

If your pet is distressed or agitated in any way, the vet will talk you through the options for sedation. We are dedicated to providing a peaceful, stress free experience for your pet at this time, and we hope by doing so we ensure it is as peaceful as it can be for you.

When you and your pet are ready the vet will introduce an anaesthetic agent known as pentobarbital into your pet's vein. This agent is much, much stronger than the drugs used

to anaesthetise your pet for an operation or procedure, and is brightly coloured. Your pet will drift off to sleep very quickly. Only once your pet is asleep and unaware, will they cease to breath and following this their heart will stop beating. Many owners are surprised at how quickly, and how peacefully their pets drift off into their final rest.

Once this has occurred the vet will let you know that your pet has died. Sometimes your pet may take what appears to be a final breath or two, twitch, or may go to the toilet. These are normal events following death, but they can be distressing for you if you are not aware they may happen. The vet will stay with you for a while after your pets passing to guide you and support you should this happen.

It is also worth preparing yourself for the fact that your pets eyes will remain open once they have died, it is unfortunately not possible to close them and for them to remain closed in most cases.

Our vets will ensure that you can stay undisturbed with your pet for as long as you choose to.

Please do not feel obliged to stay if you do not want to, we know everyone deals with the euthanasia process very differently, and it is important to act as you feel you need to at this time.

When you are ready to leave, our vets will escort you out of the practice via our back door. This way you do not need to worry about walking past other owners in our waiting area.

#### **AT HOME:**

Should you choose to have our vets visit your beloved friend in your home they will introduce themselves to you and your faithful friend, and will talk you through the consent form that you will be required to sign, as well as what to expect and your decisions regarding the aftercare of your pet. They will help you choose an appropriate place to perform the procedure, and will help you settle your pet.

Once this has been done the vet will clip a small area on one of their legs. Sometimes the vet will place an intravenous cannula (a small plastic tube) into your pet's vein, and sometimes they will choose not too – they will discuss their decision with you, and you should be aware that you can ask any question that you want to at this time.

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Please do not feel obliged to stay in the same room as your pet if you do not feel able to, we know everyone deals with the euthanasia process very differently, and it is important to act as you feel you need to at this time.

When you are ready our vets will leave you, and if necessary will bring your pet back to the practice for cremation if this is what you have chosen. It is worth preparing your pet's favourite bed or blanket if you wish for them to be cremated with them.

### **EUTHANASING RABBITS OR SMALL PETS:**

Whilst the drugs used are the same for all pets, there are some small differences in the way rabbits and small pets are euthanased compared to dogs and cats.

We will typically introduce the pentobarbital injection into your rabbit's ear vein, although we may use their leg vein if necessary.

When euthanasing pets such as rodents, birds, snakes or lizards, we will anaesthetise your pet using a general anaesthetic gas prior to the introduction of the pentobarbital. Unfortunately, because of health and safety considerations, it will not be possible for you to be present whilst your pet is anaesthetised and euthanased but please rest assured that they will not be alone, and will be treated with respect and care by all our team members. It will be possible for you to see your pet once they have passed away should you so wish.

### **SUPPORT:**

We are here to help support you both before, during and after the euthanasia process. We offer you the opportunity to create a memorial to your pet at our own website [www.mypetsvetsltd.co.uk](http://www.mypetsvetsltd.co.uk) via our 'forget me not' page.

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>**

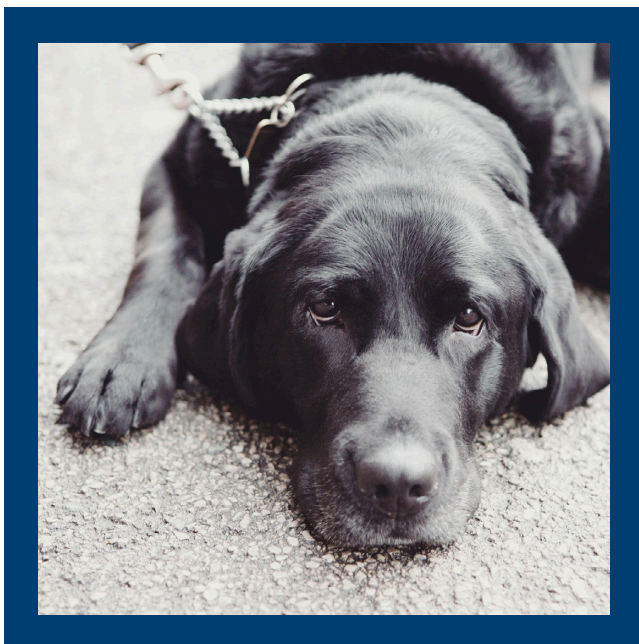
The NHS have some free support leaflets downloadable from  
**<http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp>**

There are also trained pet bereavement counsellors who can help you at this time.

In addition the Ralph Site, which can be found on Facebook and at  
**<http://www.theralphsite.com>** offers advice, information and support in the form of forums.

**We understand and appreciate that this is a distressing and worrying time for you, please talk to any member of our team regarding any concerns, questions or worries you may have.**





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