

Is It Time?

A guide to understanding compassionate pet euthanasia and knowing when it's time to say goodbye.

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Is it time?



There are few relationships in our lives as emotional and rewarding as the one with our pet. Animals have a magical ability to give us love, heal emotional pain, and provide us with a sense that we are important and needed.

Every pet parent knows there's nothing more heart-warming and mood lifting than coming home at the end of a long day to a warm, eager furry friend. Their only desire is to display their love and affection for us and they are grateful that we're there with them, and for them.

Their presence changes the energy of that home and creates an atmosphere that makes you smile and feel more comforted, appreciated and loved.

However, a lifetime of love, affection and companionship from your beloved pet does not come without a price. At some point, one of the most difficult realizations that every pet parent must face is that one day, you will have to say goodbye to your beloved friend.

As pet parents ourselves, we know the heartache and pain that comes when you're faced with making the right decision for your pet. We've put together this informative guide to help you know when it's time to help your pet cross over, guide you through the euthanasia process and to help you understand your post-euthanasia options.

About In-Home Euthanasia

It makes sense to begin with understanding the word itself – euthanasia means “easy death” in Greek, and in veterinary medicine it generally refers to the process that ends an animal's life in a compassionate manner.

Compassionate euthanasia is generally undertaken when a pet's quality of life has diminished to the point that it is suffering from a terminal illness, in immense pain or is no longer able to enjoy the activities, interaction and engagement it once did, due to age.

In all cases, a compassionate euthanasia may only be performed by a veterinarian who is able to properly diagnose and monitor the animal's condition and deliver the necessary sedatives and drugs required to ensure the animal is not subjected to suffering, pain or distress.

When administered by a veterinarian, euthanasia is generally a peaceful process where the animal shows little or no visible reaction to the injections. This allows the pet's parent to know they have gently helped their pet to end their suffering, pain and difficulty.



How is In-Home Euthanasia Performed?

Once the decision has been made that euthanasia is the most compassionate option for the pet, it's time to schedule an appointment with one of our caring veterinarians to provide our in-home Vets To Go service. We recognize that the decision to euthanize sometimes has to be made quickly, so we work hard to accommodate short-notice euthanasia requests, whenever our schedule permits.

At the scheduled time, our veterinarian will come to your home and help you prepare a space that is the most comfortable for you and your pet. An in-home euthanasia appointment typically lasts about 30-45 minutes and during the appointment your vet will explain the euthanasia process and make sure all of your questions and concerns are answered so that the experience is as peaceful and comfortable as possible.

To perform the euthanasia, our veterinarian first gives your pet a sedative, which relaxes them and reduces any immediate pain and discomfort they're feeling. Your pet remains conscious and aware during this time, and this allows you to spend some final peaceful moments together. When you are ready, a second injection of an anaesthesia agent is then delivered, which serves to gently stop the heart and brain function.

In most cases, a pet appears to simply fall asleep within a few seconds, which is why this process is often referred to as "putting them to sleep."

In some rare instances, an animal may demonstrate an involuntary physical response to the injections, which may include whimpering, crying, shaking or some kind of other physical response. In these cases, the response normally passes within seconds and the animal continues on their path to "going to sleep."

It should be noted that we only offer compassionate euthanasia services to senior and terminally ill pets and do not provide "convenience" euthanasia services (meaning the reason for the euthanasia is not medical or age-related in nature).

How Long Does It Take To Arrange An Appointment?

If you feel your pet may be in need of our services in the near future, we strongly recommend booking an appointment in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts. Please contact our client services team at **1-888-995-8387** to schedule an appointment.

You don't need to be an existing Vets To Go client to use our services. We will make every effort possible to help make sure we can help you during such a difficult and important time.

Who Can Be Present During The Appointment

This is a very personal decision for you to make, but one of the advantages of a private in-home euthanasia is that it allows you to be in your own home and arrange for whomever you wish to attend. Children, close friends and even other pets are welcome to attend, if you choose.

Some people have their entire family in the room while the euthanasia takes place; others wait and then bring their children



and/or other pets into the room once the pet has passed. Sometimes, people invite a very close friend or other family member over to the home if they live alone.

We always recommend having someone to support you during the euthanasia, as it can be a very emotional experience.

How Do I Know When “It’s Time?”

The decision to end your pet’s life is an agonizing one, but it is often one of the most selfless and loving decisions you can make for your animal.

In many cases, pet parents delay making this difficult decision because of guilt or fear that they are ending their pet’s life too early or they themselves are not ready to lose their pet. Unfortunately, this can often prolong an animal’s pain and suffering – so it is essential to understand when it is the right time to euthanize a pet.

An important thing to keep in mind is that animals are very good at hiding the fact that they are in pain or discomfort. In the animal world, outward signs of weakness or distress make an animal vulnerable, and as a result of this instinct, our pets often do their best to hide when they are in pain or not feeling well. This is why it’s so important to have a thorough vet exam completed regularly, especially as pets get older.

Quality of Life Consultation

If you’re not sure if your pet is ready, a Quality of Life Consultation can help you get the answers you need from a medical perspective. This type of appointment is designed to answer questions related to your pet’s quality of life and see if there are any medications or treatment options that may help your pet live out their final days more comfortably -- or if it’s time to euthanize.

Once onsite, our vet will do a complete medical exam, as well as learn more about your pet’s daily habits, mobility and other factors that can help determine if the time has come to help your pet cross over.

If the vet finds that it is indeed time to humanely euthanize your pet, there is ample time scheduled into the Quality of Life Consultation to perform the euthanasia, if you choose to do so during the same appointment.

*If you are struggling to determine whether or not it’s time for your pet to pass on, please contact us at **1-888-995-8387** and arrange for an in-home Quality of Life Consultation with one of our caring veterinarians.*

The Most Important Consideration of All

One of the most accepted guidelines used by veterinarians to determine whether euthanasia may be the right choice or not is this:

Do your pet’s bad days outnumber their good days?

Since the purpose of euthanasia is to eliminate prolonged, untreatable, or inevitable suffering, it can be argued that it’s better to euthanize a terminally ill or aged animal a day too early than a day too late. If on balance your pet has more difficult and “bad” days, that is a strong indicator that you likely need to face the painful decision to euthanize your pet and end their suffering.



Quality of Life Checklist

Here are some of the most important elements of your pet's quality of life for you to consider. Keep in mind that no single element is an indicator in itself – you should be considering all of these factors together to determine the overall quality of life your pet has now and will have in the future.

Pain or Discomfort

- ☐ Is your pet in constant pain or discomfort?
- ☐ Is it clear they're suffering and not feeling well?
- ☐ Is their breathing faster or more difficult than usual?
- ☐ Do they whimper or yelp if picked up or touched?
- ☐ Do they have sores or wounds that will not heal?

Appetite and Hydration

- ☐ Has the amount of food they consume gone down?
- ☐ Are they not eating the things they used to love?
- ☐ Do they turn down offers of treats or cookies?
- ☐ Has the amount of water they're drinking gone down or up significantly?

Affection/Engagement Level

- ☐ Does your pet seem less interested in giving you affection, or they enjoy doing so less?
- ☐ Has their interest or willingness to come to you and engage you become reduced?
- ☐ Are they hiding more and seeking to be alone more than they have in the past?
- ☐ Does it seem like they're not responding to your affection as much as usual?

Mobility

- ☐ Have they lost interest in activities (eg: going for walks, playing with a favourite toy, etc.)?
- ☐ Do they have difficulty when trying to stand or get up from a lying position?
- ☐ Are they no longer able to go up/down stairs, or do they avoid certain areas of your home?
- ☐ Do they avoid certain physical activities (such as walking on a certain leg/foot, or walking at all)?

Physical And Mental Ability

- ☐ Does reduced or lost eyesight impair their ability to move around?
- ☐ Has their hearing decreased to the point of them being hard of hearing or deaf?
- ☐ Do they show signs of dementia or confusion?
- ☐ Do they seem more restless, pace more, and appear unable to settle down (especially at night)?
- ☐ Is their heart racing or beating faster than usual?

Elimination Issues

- ☐ Are they having more accidents inside the house than in the past?
- ☐ Are they not urinating or defecating where they normally would in a regular spot?
- ☐ Do they have trouble going to the bathroom (i.e.: straining, shaking or losing balance)?
- ☐ Is their bladder leaking throughout the day or night, or do they smell of urine or feces?

Happiness Level

- ☐ Does their level of happiness seem diminished?
- ☐ Do they seem depressed or sad, or are they lethargic and uninterested in things around them?
- ☐ Do they not enjoy certain things they used to?
- ☐ Do you feel like your pet has told you or given you signs that they are ready to go?

Other Factors To Consider

- ☐ Has your pet been diagnosed with a significant or terminal disease, and what are the implications?
- ☐ Are you able to provide for their physical needs as required (i.e.: carrying them upstairs, outside, etc.)?
- ☐ Has your pet been recently examined to eliminate potential underlying issues or causes of concern?

For appointments or more information, contact
1-888-995-8387 or vetstogo@vca.com

Vets To Go Services and Fees

What is included in the Quality of Life Consultation?

- A full nose to tail medical exam by a licensed veterinarian in your home
- An independent medical opinion of your pet's quality of life and help deciding "is it time?" based on your pet's health
- An environmental assessment to help improve quality of life for aging pets (if applicable)
- Recommendations for treatments to make your pet more comfortable if euthanasia is not yet required (if applicable)
- Ample time built into the appointment if you and your veterinarian decide that compassionate euthanasia is the most humane option for your pet

What is included with the Euthanasia service?

- A scheduled in-home visit with one of our compassionate veterinarians
- Preparation for where your pet is most comfortable: a favourite chair or couch, on the bed, in your arms, or wherever you prefer that they'll be happiest
- All required sedation, medication, and monitoring
- Assistance with coordinating post-euthanasia cremation services. Please note that this is a separate service option provided by Vets To Go or one of our trusted partners. Alternately, you may choose to handle the remains yourself after the service is completed. (Please see the next section for more details.)

How much does it cost for these services?

Please contact us for more information and pricing of our euthanasia services.

CONTACT US



After Euthanasia

What Do I Do with My Pet's Remains?

We know how difficult it is to lose your beloved pet, and want to help make the pet removal and cremation process as stress free and comfortable as possible.

Cremation and aftercare service options depend on the city you are located in. Our caring client services team will coordinate our visit with the after care team so they are waiting outside and available to you as soon as the Veterinarian has left the appointment.

There are two types of cremation services available: private and general. A private cremation means that your pet will be cremated individually so that you can have their ashes returned to you in a scatter box or urn. General cremation means that your pet will be cremated along with other animals and you will not be able to have your pet's ashes returned to you.

If you choose private cremation, your pet's ashes are usually available for pickup within seven days. If you prefer to handle the remains yourself or make your own cremation arrangements, you're more than welcome to do so. Additionally, our team can help you choose an appropriately sized urn to hold your pet's ashes or to choose a memorial keepsake.

When you schedule your Vets To Go appointment, simply let our client services team know if you're planning to use our removal and cremation services or if you prefer to make your own arrangements. Also, please don't feel rushed to choose an urn or memorial item, as we know these are difficult decisions to make. The only thing we need to know at the time of your appointment is if you desire a private or general cremation and if you would like a clay paw print impression done, as these items are time sensitive.

We know that making these arrangements can be an overwhelming experience, so if there is anything we can help with or if you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to call our team at **1-888-995-8387**, or email us at vetstogo@vca.com.

You're Not Alone: Pet Loss Support

As pet parents ourselves, we know first-hand what it's like to lose a beloved pet. We understand how heartbreaking it can be and we're here to support you through this difficult time. It's important to know that after your pet passes on it's completely normal to feel a wide range of emotions including anger, guilt, sadness, shock, loneliness and denial. It's important that you allow yourself a chance to grieve your loss and process these complex feelings.

To help support you following your pet's euthanasia, we've developed our website with information and resources for both children and adults.

You can access this information 24 hours a day online at:
vcacanada.com/vetstogo