

ORCHARD HILLS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Euthanasia - The final act of caring

Pets enrich our lives beyond measure. They give us the comfort of their companionship. They accept us without criticism or judgment and they provide the one thing that few people are able to give: unconditional love.

No wonder, then, that the decision to end the life of an animal friend is so difficult. No wonder we put it off as long as possible.

As you face the painful decision about euthanasia, be assured that the trust your pet has in you is well placed. The compassion that compels you to end the life of your animal friend is a final act of caring – a final act of love.

Making this decision is a highly emotional time and many people say that it is harder than dealing with the grief process later.

Why is this such a hard decision to make?

- Many owners feel that they are 'playing God'
- Many are too embarrassed or have difficulty with talking to the vet about the topic.
- Many worry about the correct time of such a decision.
- For many, the thought of being without a much-loved pet is too much to handle.
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How can you prepare yourself for the inevitable when the time draws near?

1. Discuss everything with your Vet before hand (as soon as it becomes obvious that euthanasia is imminent).
2. Don't make any hasty decisions unless necessary. Discuss the matter with your family and reach a unanimous decision if possible. Maybe take your animal home for a few days for a final meaningful time together if you have just received the bad news.
3. Do not leave any important decisions till 'the last minute'.
 - e.g. - Do you want to be present when your pet is put to sleep? Don't feel guilty if you can't handle this – you can say goodbye beforehand.
 - Do you want cremation or burial for your pet?
 - Do you want children present?

Questions you might like to ask your Vet include the following:-

1. Are you making the right decision and is your timing right?

We will talk to you about quality of life, including normal everyday activities, the degree of pain, interest in eating, general happiness.

2. Can the vet make the decision for you?

We will supply you with information about the condition, possible treatment options, prognosis, choices of reasonable quality of life etc., but you and your family will have to make the final decision.

3. How is Euthanasia performed?

At Orchard Hills Veterinary Hospital your pet is brought into a private room set aside for this purpose. He/she is given a pain free intravenous injection (with or without your presence) you may hold your pet during the procedure if you wish. The animal falls into a deep sleep and 'slips away' within 10 – 20 seconds. This is usually a stress free time for the animal, but if your pet is the anxious type we will use sedation beforehand.

4. How will you feel afterwards?

Most owners go through a grieving process. This is perfectly normal – you have just lost a very good friend! You will probably do a lot of crying! Many people chose to take the day off work, to gather their emotions. Help yourself through the grieving process by talking to others about your pet. Maybe compile a scrapbook or photo album. Don't rush buying another pet – give yourself time. Remember time heals all wounds – you will want another friend in the future

Remember that we at Orchard Hills Veterinary Hospital are only a phone call away for advise, help or just someone to talk to.

5. Will my other pets grieve?

Yes, they probably will for a short time but affection from you and time with you will help enormously.

Remember, you are grieving together!

THE DECISION IS NEVER EASY, BUT IT IS **AN ACT OF LOVE**