



End of Life Care



Introduction



We understand that being faced with losing your pet is one of the most heartbreaking decisions to make. We have tried to detail as much as possible in this leaflet as to what to expect on the day that you finally have to make that choice.

If there is anything that you would like clarification on, please speak to our client care team in advance or to the vet that you will see at your appointment.

Understanding the Euthanasia Procedure

Cats & Dogs



When you come into the Practice and let reception know that you are here, they will try to move you to a quiet area of the Practice and they will let the vet know that you are waiting. There will be a bed available for your pet to make them as comfortable as possible. Alternatively, you are more than welcome to bring their own bed if you would prefer.

The vet will come and introduce themselves to you, they will explain the process in detail:

- They will need to obtain permission and to ascertain your wishes for your pet after they have passed. To do this, they will go through a consent form with you. You will be able to tick the options you have chosen, you will also be able to discuss with the vet if you need any further information.
- The vet will then ask you to sign the consent form to allow them to proceed.
- You are not required to stay with your pet during the procedure, and whilst a lot of people choose to do so, it is not something that everyone feels comfortable with. If this is the decision you make, then rest assured that a member of the nursing/reception team will be there to hold your pet during this time.

The Euthanasia Procedure



The usual method of euthanasia is via an injection into one of the veins in the leg (ear vein in rabbits).

To ensure that the process is as smooth as possible there are a number of things that will happen:

- The vet will need to place an intravenous catheter. An intravenous catheter is a tube that is inserted into the vein through the skin, and is secured in place with tape.
- This allows for a secure channel to be able to administer the medication smoothly, it also means that you can usually hold and comfort your pet throughout the process.
- This will also reduce the amount of people required to assist with the procedure, often it will mean that it can just be you and the vet in the room, this won't always be the case, but for the most part this is what we try and aim for.
- To place the intravenous catheter, we would normally have to move your pet through to an area whereby a nurse can assist. A small amount of hair will be clipped from the area where the catheter will be placed.
- Whilst we appreciate that these are precious moments for you and your pet, we have found it tends to reduce stress at this point for them if we take them to our clinical area to do this.

Sedation



Occasionally some animals can become distressed at the vets; most people know this to be the case with their pets through past experience. If you feel your pet may become distressed then we can offer sedation as an option. If this is something that you feel your pet would benefit from please let us know when booking the appointment. This way the vet can make sure that the sedation is prepared in advance and can be administered by a vet or nurse as soon as you arrive at the practice to limit the stress.

Using sedation reduces the blood pressure in animals so this can sometimes make gaining access to a vein slightly harder, which is why we would only recommend it in patients that exhibit very high levels of anxiety in a Practice setting, as this can make placing a catheter sometimes a little harder.

Once the catheter has been placed, the vet will come back to the room. They will confirm that you wish to proceed and at this time the injection will be given. The injection used is an overdose of an anaesthetic, this means that your pet will peacefully fall asleep and then pass away. This happens much quicker than people usually expect, typically less than a minute.

What to expect immediately after your pets passing



Once the vet has administered the medication, they will use a stethoscope to check your pet's heart; they will confirm for you that it has stopped and that they have passed away.

Once they have passed away as their body starts to relax then there can be a couple of side effects that are quite normal:

- It is very normal for them to urinate or defecate and to prepare for this the vet or nurse will have some incontinence pads to hand, they will usually place these under your pet for you after the injection has been given.
- It is not uncommon for some animals to have a gasping reflex after they have passed away. This can be understandably upsetting, however they are unaware. It is just the natural process of their body systems relaxing.
- Animals do not close their eyes afterwards either which can be upsetting for some people.
- These reflexes do not affect all animals but they can be understandably worrying if you are unaware that they may be a possibility.

You are welcome to spend as much time with your pet following the procedure, we are also more than happy to take a paw print and hair clipping for you if you would like. This can be prepared for you to take with you, or alternatively some people prefer to collect it when they collect their pets ashes (if you have chosen a cremation) or at a later date. It is also absolutely fine if you would rather not stay and if you don't want a paw print or hair clipping, it is not for everyone and that is ok.

Once you are ready to leave, our staff will be on hand to show you out. If you have chosen to have your pet cremated, our nurses will carefully move your pet through to an area where they can respectfully tend to them. They will be then placed gently into cold storage to be collected for cremation. If you have decided to take your pet home to bury, the staff will gently wrap your pet and carefully assist you to your car. If you need time before taking your pet home then we can usually look after them for you until you are able to collect them. If this is the case please let us know when you intend to collect them so we can remove them from cold storage and have them ready for you.

Understanding the Euthanasia Procedure

*Small Mammals**



With smaller pets it is unfortunately much harder to find a vein due to their size. The most humane and least stressful way to euthanase them is by anaesthetising them within an anaesthetic chamber.

This is the same way that we anaesthetise them if they were having a surgical procedure done. Due to health and safety regulations we are unable to allow you to be there if we have to use an anaesthetic chamber. However, the vet will ask you if you would like to wait to see your pet afterwards, and will bring them to you so that you are able to spend time with them following the procedure.

The only small pet that we will try and get a catheter into would be in the ear vein of a rabbit. This may not always be possible due to ill health, especially if they are dehydrated, but an attempt will always be made so that you can still be with them if you want to be.

*Smaller pets such as rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, hamsters and birds.

Deciding on aftercare options for your pet



There are several options available to you after your pet has passed away. Whilst it is not an easy topic to think about, you may find it helpful to discuss options with your loved ones before the appointment. Having this time to prepare prior to coming into the practice should mean that on the day your focus can be solely on supporting each other and your pet.

Home Burial

Some people take great comfort in burying their pet at home; it allows them to mark a grave, either with a headstone or a plant. This choice isn't for everyone; some people live in rented accommodation, or might simply not like the idea of it.

If you decide that this is something you want to do, then you just need to ensure that you research the required depth of the grave, as well as ensuring that you are not burying too close to a water source. They should be wrapped in biodegradable material.

When leaving the practice, our staff will gently wrap your pet for you, if you would prefer to bring a bed or favourite blanket from home we can use that instead, and place incontinence pads beneath them. They will help to carry them to your car for you; it would be recommended to have waterproof material in the car to place underneath them.

Cremation

The Crematorium that the practice uses is called Summerleaze pet crematorium and is based in South Wales. They collect from the Practice regularly, and also welcome visitors if you wanted to see the area for yourself. There are areas for reflection as well as a remembrance garden. Staff members from the Practice often visit the crematorium and are more than happy to talk about their experiences and what they offer.

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There are two types of cremation, individual cremation with ashes returned and cremation without ashes returned:

- **Cremation without Ashes Returned**

Your pet will be cremated with other pets. The ashes will then be interred in one of the licensed gardens of remembrance.

- **Cremation with Ashes Returned**

Your pet will be cremated alone in an individual chamber. Each individual cremation is done one at a time; this allows the crematorium to ensure that it will be only your pet's ashes you are receiving back.

There is a wide choice of vessels to receive your pet's ashes back in - please see the sheet included within this pack. It is a very individual choice, not everyone wants to keep hold of their pet's ashes.

Some people like to scatter them, usually in a favourite place or to bury them. Some people like to bury some of the ashes and some use them to make a keepsake such as jewellery. Other people like to store them or display them. There is no right or wrong way to remember and cope with the loss of your family member. You need to do what you feel is right for you, and this is why there are so many options available.



Big enough to cope...
small enough to care.

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Our Branches



Drove Veterinary Hospital

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☎ 01793 522483

Abbey Meads

Abbey Meads Village Centre, Elstree Way, Swindon, SN25 4YX

☎ 01793 728728

Marlborough

51 London Road, Marlborough, SN8 2AJ

☎ 01672 512043

Ridgeway Farm

Ridgeway Farm, 19 Webbs Place, Swindon, SN5 4FU

☎ 01793 614461

Royal Wootton Bassett

Unit 5, Borough Fields, Royal Wootton Bassett, SN4 7AX

☎ 01793 852466

Stratton

Unit 6, Hobley Drive, Swindon, SN3 4NS

☎ 01793 821821



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