

# A Gentle way to say Goodbye

**Ask a pet owner to identify the hardest part about having a pet and the majority will answer 'saying goodbye.'**

**A**s owners, we all dread the day that we may have to face this situation and I have lost count of the number of times that I have heard owners say that they wish that their cat or dog would just peacefully fall asleep at home and not wake up. The real but sad truth is that this rarely happens. Animals will often continue to live through severe and debilitating diseases, experiencing a poor quality of life and maybe even suffering. It is all too often up to us as their owners and their vets to prevent this and sometimes euthanasia (or a 'good death' as it literally means) is the fairest option.

Those of you that have been through the process will know better than anyone – we remember what happens on those days and our experiences have a huge effect on the way that we are able to deal with our loss. Knowing what your options will be and having a think about what you prefer before the event will make it easier at the time. I've been through this with owners hundreds of times and I



genuinely believe that those who are even a little bit prepared, will find things easier.

As much as I like to feel that my pets know and understand everything that I say to them (and occasionally ready my mind!) there are times when it's good to accept that this isn't true. Thinking about or talking about this is ok. Animals don't understand death in the same way that we do and they certainly can't process the concept of euthanasia, so try to keep this in mind. They don't know what we're talking about, but by talking we might make things easier for them when the time comes.

Very often, once the decision has been made that euthanasia is the kindest option, we must then decide how or where this is to be done. There may be circumstances in an emergency where this isn't possible, but often there is time to make some plans and decide whether to perform the euthanasia in the clinic or at home. This is a decision to be made with our pet as a priority, but also have a think about how you feel as their owner too.

What is 'normal' to a cat and a dog is very different. Dogs love to go out – for walks, in the car, to new places and some even like visiting the vets although sadly, not all of them feel comfortable in the surgery. On the whole, cats don't like leaving their home environment at all and taking them anywhere can be stressful for all involved. For you as an owner, taking your cat or dog on their 'last' journey can be extremely tough – both practically and emotionally



and it's perfectly ok to admit that it's too much, especially when being at home is an option. Dianne Cardwell remembers making the decision to have her dog put to sleep at home:

*'I had to let my much-loved Irish Setter, Rupert, go in February. I arranged for the vet to come to our house rather than dragging him to the surgery. This was definitely the best decision as he was so relaxed and calm. He ate rare roast beef while he slowly went to sleep. It couldn't have been better for Rupert – he was in his own safe place and I wouldn't have had it any other way.'*

Being in a loving and familiar environment of your own home can make things slightly easier. Loved ones can be present, or in the next room to offer support and the degree of privacy that a home euthanasia gives you often means that you can express your grief and sadness far more openly than if you know that there is a waiting

room full of people outside that you may then have to walk through.

From a vet's point of view, I like home visits. I feel that they give me the opportunity to be completely focussed on the patient and the people involved and to do my absolute best for them. It is a privilege to be invited into someone's home at the time like this and to be able to contribute to making the experience as positive as it can be. It might sound strange, but it is incredibly rewarding.

When Anne Whelan's cat became poorly with untreatable cancer, she elected to have a home visit:

*'Our beautiful cat hated going in the carrier whether it was to the vets or otherwise. I also had a partner who could not travel to the vets and needed to feel, and be part of it too. The vet was wonderful, nothing was rushed; it was calm and dignified.*

*I have had both experiences in*

*my life as a pet owner - euthanasia at the practice and at home. This is by far the nicest, most dignified, less stressful for all of us and most fitting end for our beautiful cat.'*

In terms of arranging home visits for euthanasia, veterinary practices will always do their best to accommodate you when you need them, but we are now fortunate that there are services available who are specifically provide gentle home euthanasia visits. Cloud 9 Vets aims to give all UK pet owners access to home visits for euthanasia, 7 days a week. A highly skilled and compassionate veterinary surgeon will visit the pet in their home, providing a gentle and unrushed euthanasia and then if necessary, cremation can be arranged via a private crematorium. The company's founder, Lisbet Stuer-Lauridsen

said: 'In vet practices, the focus is on health and getting an animal better, but when that time comes when there is no getting better, we can be there to help.'

I am very proud to be one of Cloud 9's Vets. I will always do my best for my patients and their human families and visiting them in their own home gives the best opportunity to do this.

■ For more information on home visit euthanasia and the service provided by **Cloud 9 Vets**, you can visit their website at **cloud9vets.co.uk** or call the Care Coordinators on 08000 354 999.



## At-home pet euthanasia

A GENTLE WAY TO SAY GOODBYE



End of life care in the secure and loving environment of your own home.

Our Care Coordinators are available to help and support you at any time of the day and it is free to call | **08000 354 999**

Dignified pet goodbyes

| **cloud9vets.co.uk**