



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO AFTER-DEATH SERVICES

When a dear companion animal dies, it can leave you feeling sad and alone. And while you will no doubt feel distressed at losing a pet who was a valued member of the family, it is important to take a little time to think about how you wish to offer a final service in terms of burial or cremation.

Some people prefer to leave everything in the hands of the vet, whilst others want to make their own arrangements or employ the services of a private concern. Time spent considering this beforehand, perhaps in discussion with all members of the family, can help prevent regrets later.

What follows are a few pointers to help you think about the different options that are available.

Considering cremation – communal cremation, where several pets are cremated together, means you cannot have your pet's ashes returned. However, you can ask your vet to arrange an individual cremation. This means that you can have the ashes returned to you to bury in your garden, to scatter in a favourite place you had shared with your pet or to keep in a casket or special container. However, the cost of individual cremation is higher so you may want to check this with your vet. Alternatively you can contact a private pet crematorium which offers a similar service and which may also have a Garden of Remembrance – a peaceful place for you to visit in quiet contemplation and fond memory of your companion animal.

Considering burial – you can ask your vet for some practical advice on pet burial; however, here are a few useful tips. The law only allows people to bury their pets in grounds which they own (unless there are local by-laws against this), and therefore most people prefer to use their own garden. The whole family may wish to be involved in preparing the ground and finding a suitable stone or plant to mark your pet's final resting place.

It is wise to prepare a burial site at least four feet deep, and afterwards to place a large stone over it to maintain its integrity. You can wrap your pet's body in a blanket or sheet (biodegradable is best if possible), or you may prefer to obtain a pet coffin.

Pet cemeteries are scarcer and more costly than pet crematoriums. Your vet's surgery should be able to advise you on the availability and standard of local services.

There may be other things to think about. Your vet may advise a post mortem, or pet insurers may require this. If so, there are important considerations to discuss with your vet, one of these being that you may not be able to bury or cremate your pet's remains afterwards.

For larger animals, such as a pony or horse, you can seek the advice of your vet to find out what services are available – naturally, the cost involved is higher and facilities may be less easy to access.

The Association of Private Pet Cemeteries and Crematoria provide important information and definition of after-death services for pets, because they advise pet-owners to look beyond the glossy marketing presentation of private firms to ensure that the standard of care delivered matches that which is advertised.

Ceremonies and memorials are, of course, a matter of personal choice and belief. Children often naturally arrange a pet funeral in their own way and select special stones, flowers, plants and mementos for a site in the garden. It can be an excellent way for the family to come together to make a mark of respect and remembrance, and to recognise their mutual grief. Even when the body or ashes of your pet cannot be buried for any reason, having a particular place of remembrance in the garden can bring comfort in the days to follow. Engraved plaques and stones are available from a number of sources, including, of course, the internet.

Finally, it is perfectly natural to go through a grief process at the loss of a companion animal, and EASE offers a number of different resources to help support you during this difficult time, which are downloadable from the EASE website.



This Support Sheet has been produced by EASE (registered Charity No: 1089160). All information contained within this document is intended to be supportive only, and should not be interpreted as prescriptive or advisory, nor should it be seen as an alternative to medical care from your doctor when required. EASE offers this support service without charge and will not be held liable for any misunderstanding that may occur to a recipient who chooses to read it.

www.ease-animals.org.uk