



Saying Goodbye: What to Expect

PETSLIKEMINE

QUALITY OF LIFE & END-OF-LIFE

A calm, factual walk-through of the day, so that knowing takes the dread out of it

PET NAME _____	VET PRACTICE _____	AT HOME OR CLINIC _____
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Once you have decided, a different fear often moves in: not knowing what the day itself will be like. Wanting to know is not ghoulish; it is the opposite. The thing that distresses families most is the parts they did not see coming, so here is what actually happens, gently and plainly. Everything in it is built around one aim: keeping your pet calm, unafraid and free of pain.

AT HOME OR AT THE CLINIC, BOTH CAN BE RIGHT

Either can be the gentler choice for your particular pet and family. A familiar room can ease stress, and a clinic brings everything to hand; your vet will help you weigh it. Wherever you are, the quiet of your hand and the sound of your voice are doing real work.

BEFORE: SETTLED IN ADVANCE, SO THE END IS ONLY GOODBYE

- The consent form, the payment and the aftercare choice can almost always be settled beforehand
- A small catheter is often placed in a front leg, so the final injection is smooth and your pet can be held, not restrained
- Your vet will talk it through first: there are no questions too small or too frightened to ask
- A sedative beforehand is common and a real kindness: they grow drowsy and heavy and often drift into sleep in your arms

THE FINAL INJECTION: GENTLE, AND MEASURED IN SECONDS

It is an anaesthetic, the same family of medicine used for ordinary operations, given in a larger dose into a vein. It switches off the thinking, feeling part of the brain first, so your pet falls deeply asleep within seconds, and only then, already unaware, do the breathing and heartbeat quietly stop. Your vet will listen with a stethoscope afterwards to gently confirm your pet has gone.

WHAT YOU MAY SEE, AND WHY NONE OF IT IS SUFFERING

Because consciousness is always lost first, anything that follows happens to a pet who is already asleep and feels none of it. Their eyes often stay open (closing them is an active muscle that has relaxed). There may be a final reflex breath or sigh a little while after the heart stops, a twitch or tremble, or the bladder relaxing. Each is a reflex in a sleeping body, not your pet struggling. Sedation makes the reflex breath less likely.

BEING THERE, CHILDREN AND OTHER PETS, AND AFTERWARDS

- Being in the room, or stepping out, are both completely valid: your pet is at peace either way
- Whether children come is your call; a calm, honest few words beforehand help, and they can say goodbye after
- When it is over there is no clock: sit as long as you need, and ask for a paw print or fur if you would like one
- A middle path: stay for the sedation as they drift to sleep, and step out before the final injection
- Other pets sometimes settle from a quiet sniff afterwards; there is no rule, and no rush

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CARRY THIS ALONE

Written and reviewed by Dr Alastair Greenway MRCVS and Claire Greenway BVM&S MRCVS. This sheet explains and records. It does not diagnose or prescribe. Always follow your own vet's instructions.

The Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support Service is free on 0800 096 6666, every day 8.30am to 8.30pm, and supports owners before a goodbye as much as after. The Samaritans are there day or night on 116 123. Reaching out is not weakness. **QUIET, ORDINARY AND TENDER; THEY SLIP INTO SLEEP FIRST**

How to use. The kindest thing you can do for the day is settle the form, the payment and the aftercare in advance, so it asks nothing of you but to be there, with your hand on warm fur. A wellbeing aid, not a substitute for veterinary advice.