Euthanasia

Banfield Pet Hospital® is committed to helping pets live longer, healthier lives. Our focus is on providing preventive care through our Optimum Wellness Plans® so we can catch disease early and before it compromises pets’ lives.

Eventually, your pet’s quality of life may decrease because of disease or old age, and you may be faced with the difficult decision of whether to end your friend’s pain and suffering through the humane termination of life. Before you make that decision, we’ll do all we can to help you understand what quality of life you can expect for your pet with various treatment options, if any exist.

During euthanasia, veterinarians typically inject an overdose of an anesthetic drug, a humane procedure. A mild tranquilizer is sometimes given before the procedure for the pet’s comfort. If you wish, you may be present. For many people, comforting a pet in its final moments helps give a feeling of closure. A painless injection puts pets in a deep sleep and then stops their bodily functions.

Farewell decisions

Another of the difficult decisions you’ll face concerns your pet’s body. You have several considerations:

Burial – A burial ceremony helps many pet owners achieve closure and say goodbye. Many people bury their pets at home. If you decide to do so, check local laws first; many cities have restrictions against home burial. Pet cemeteries can provide a good alternative. Check with your Banfield medical team or consult the telephone directory to find a pet cemetery.

Cremation – Most families choose cremation. It’s usually available at conglomerate or individual rates. With individual cremation, your pet’s ashes can be returned to you; with conglomerate cremation, they are not. At Banfield, we work directly with the cremation facility to make your difficult time a little easier.

Memorials – A memorial reminds you of the positive impact your pet had on your life. Banfield Charitable Trust, PetSmart® charities, humane societies and veterinary schools will all accept donations in your pet’s name. You may want to contribute something to your pet’s favorite park or to a worthy pet cause. Planting a tree is a long-lasting, beautiful reminder of your departed friend.

Necropsy – Your Banfield veterinarian can perform a necropsy (autopsy) at your request.
The grieving process
No matter why a pet dies, the people who share its life experience grief. Grieving is a natural, emotional process that everyone experiences when faced with a personal loss. This period is confusing and full of conflicting feelings and thoughts.

Everyone grieves differently. Some people need time alone while others need the love and understanding of friends and relatives. Most people experience the following stages of grief:

Denial – At the moment we discover the loss of a loved one, we may deny the death. No one wants to accept the death of a best friend. We doubt the reality of the situation: “It can’t be true.”

Anger – Once the reality of the death sinks in, we become angry that we can’t bring back our friend. We don’t want to accept the loss. Some people respond with anger toward others. Other people turn the anger inward, blaming themselves for the loss. Mourners may not mean what they say or do during this time, and friends, family and often the medical team must be sympathetic even if it’s difficult. It’s equally important for the grieving person to try to remain in control and consider the feelings of others.

Sadness – The longest stage, sadness or mourning, is a period of emptiness and loss when we struggle to come to terms with life without our friend. Counseling may help some people work through their muddled feelings. Focusing on the love of other pets and family members is usually the best therapy.

Acceptance – In the final stage of grieving, we accept the passing of our friend. We wish our friend were here with us, but we can now fondly recall shared experiences. Accepting the natural passage from life to death allows us to continue with our lives.

Your veterinarian’s role
Your Banfield team will be sympathetic and will want to help you during these hard times and can help guide you through the grieving process. They can suggest books or, at your request, refer you to a grief counselor—someone specially trained to help you through this emotional time.

It’s never easy when an important, beloved family member passes away. Banfield can help you through the grieving process and help with decisions about a new pet once you’ve accepted your pet’s passing. We hope you’ll put your skills and value as a responsible pet owner back to work—there are too many pets in need of caring homes. Adopting a new pet is often the best memorial to the pet that has passed on.

When the time is right, come talk to us. We can help you pick the right pet. PetSmart Adoption Centers house homeless pets that are just waiting for the right family or person. Remember, though, that a new pet will not be just like the old one—each pet is different and special.