



## End of Life Decision

We live in a society where our dogs and cats are much more than pets, they are family. And as such we provide them with the best foods, entertainment, and lots and lots of love. Of course we seek veterinary care to ensure they are protected against prevalent diseases and to provide treatment for any illness afflicting them. However, sadly there comes a time when love and science are not enough to grant our beloved pet quality of life and we are forced to deliberate over the thought of putting him/her to sleep. Regardless of whether you are 8 years old or 88, this is one of the hardest decisions you will ever have to make.

I would like to discuss what signs to look for that will help guide you to make the best decision for your companion animal, for your family, and for yourself. Many times you just know in your heart that things are not right with your pet's spirit and that things are unlikely to improve. Please know that a clear definite line is not always present and that ultimately you know your furry friend better than anyone else does, which positions you as the best advocate for its well being. That said there are specific things we recommend watching for and factoring in.

- Age?
- What is the nature of ailment and the prognosis?
- Does your pet have a true chance at improvement?
- Is its weight dropping?
- Is the animal depressed all the time?
- Is there a decrease in appetite for days? Does it enjoy eating anymore?
- Is his/her activity level reduced?
- Does he/she have difficulty breathing (panting or increased respiratory effort)?
- What is the degree of suffering
- Does your pet have lack of interest; Does he/she respond to you the same as in the past?
- Does he/she vocalize or cry?
- Does he or she seem to be in constant pain?

If after contemplating your pet's current state you have accepted saying goodbye to end his or her suffering by humanely putting him or her to sleep we will be your emotional support and walk you through every step of the procedure.

There are several questions you may have that we have tried to answer in the following lines.

-Who can be present during the euthanasia? This is a very personal decision. Anyone who wishes can be present; one, all, or no family members. Some people only want the memories of all the happiness their pet brought them, while others feel they need to be with them till the end. There is no right or wrong, it's what you can live with and what you can handle emotionally.

-What documents need to be completed before the procedure? The documents needed for performing this procedure can be found on our website or in the clinic. They will consist of a consent form, along with providing us with your pets valid Miami-Dade county License tag (this only applies for canines) and your choice of which cremation service you would like.

-Where will the euthanasia procedure take place? It can be done in the clinic or it can be done in your home.

-How is the euthanasia performed? The pet is given an overdose of anesthesia intravenously which causes an instant loss of consciousness and instant loss of pain sensation. The animal peacefully and immediately falls asleep (undergoes anesthesia) and



then passes through into death without experiencing any pain. The eyes won't close. The patient can have muscle twitching or spasms, appear to gasp, and can have a bowel movement. However, be assured that they will be unconscious and will not suffer.

-What are the plans for the pet's body? We use the company Pet Heaven which is a pet crematory and pet cemetery. They offer different services such as viewings, burials, and cremations. We use them for their cremation services only. They pick up the body at our facility. We can arrange the cremation for your deceased pet with them or you can take the body with you and arrange the service you wish with them directly or with another company.

What happens with the remains after the cremation? If you choose to have a private cremation for your deceased pet, the ashes can be returned to you. If you choose group cremation, the remains will not be returned to you. There is no right or better choice.

Accepting death is always difficult and it becomes even tougher when you must decide to end a beloved pet's life. We, at Country Walk Animal Hospital, understand your pain and will strive to provide you with professional, non judgmental compassionate care.