



Family-Present Euthanasia Protocols

Laurel Lagoni, M.S.

Recommended Steps to Take Before Euthanasia

1. Assess your clients' situation to determine their emotional needs.
2. Explain the medical procedure, as well as how you will support them emotionally, and ask for questions.
3. Determine who will be present (family and staff members).
4. Choose a site (clients' home, clinic Comfort Room, outside, etc.)
5. Set an appointment date and time.
6. Discuss body care options (cremation, burial, clinic disposal)
7. If possible, complete paperwork and payment.
8. If euthanasia is performed away from your clinic:
 - Get specific directions to the site
 - Collect plenty of everything you will need:
 - Sedative to calm the animal
 - Saline solution to flush the catheter
 - Several doses of euthanasia solution
 - Several syringes and catheters
 - Sturdy board or stretcher to transport the pet if you are caring for the body (be sure it fits through doorways)
 - Waterproof tarp or plastic layer to place under pet
 - Blanket or large towel to place over plastic layer
 - Resource materials about pet loss and grief
 - Tissues, scissors and envelope for fur clippings
 - ClayPaws® kits for making paw prints
9. Remind clients to bring special toys, blankets, music, etc. that would comfort them during the euthanasia.
10. Provide clients with written information about euthanasia.

Recommended Steps to Take at the Time of Euthanasia

1. Inform selected staff about the euthanasia appointment.
2. Prepare the Comfort Room or other chosen site. Be sure tissues are nearby, the lights are lowered, and a soft surface is available on the floor or ground so the pet and family are comfortable.
3. If euthanasia is to be performed at your client's home or away from your clinic, take these additional steps:
 - Prepare the area where euthanasia will be performed.
 - Familiarize yourself with the location—locate resources in case of any unforeseen occurrence.

4. Complete needed paperwork and payment if not done in the pre-euthanasia discussion.
5. Confirm body care decisions.
6. Position yourself at eye level with your client.
7. Use a slow, soft speaking voice.
8. Explain the procedure again and ask if there are any questions.
9. Acknowledge your clients emotions, e.g. "It's ok to cry. I completely understand how you must be feeling."
10. Place catheter in the pet's hind leg. Explain what this part of the procedure will look like. If the client agrees, take the pet to another room or location for catheter placement.
11. Offer clients time alone with their pet.
12. Be discreet with syringes and, before proceeding with each injection, state what you are injecting and how the pet will react.
13. First, inject saline solution to ensure the catheter is patent.
14. Next, inject a sedative to calm your patient. Some practices like to give the sedative before catheter placement to decrease any stress, discomfort or anxiety.
15. Finally, inject the euthanasia solution.
16. After a few moments, use your stethoscope to ensure your patient has died. Gently, but clearly, pronounce the animal dead, e.g. "Mary, Rex has died", or "Mary, Rex's heart has stopped"
17. Make/collect mementos (ClayPaws® prints, fur clippings) immediately following the euthanasia.

Recommended Steps to Take After Euthanasia

1. Offer your clients additional time alone with their pet.
2. Assign one staff member to stay with the pet as the family leaves the site and another to escort the family to their car. Always remember that this is the last image your clients will have of their pet and you don't want them to see their pet left alone.
3. Follow-up with a condolence card and handwritten note, as well as a phone call, if appropriate, within 48 hours of the pet's death.

Adapted from Morehead D., Lagoni L., et. al. Guidelines for Bond-Centered Practice, 2001 (out of print).