

Making the Decision to Euthanize Your Pet

Laurel Lagoni, M.S.

Deciding whether or not to euthanize your beloved pet can be among life's most difficult decisions. You may feel you have been asked to "play God," deciding between life and death for someone you love. Yet, you are also keenly aware that your pet is suffering or has little quality of life. It's normal to feel confused and emotional during this decision-making process.

The following questions may help you make your decision:



- 1) Why is it time to consider euthanasia?
 - Has your pet lost his/her quality of life?
 - Is your animal suffering?
 - Are there behavioral problems that compromise the safety and well-being of your pet or others?
 - Are there human limitations (emotional, timing, or financial) that you must consider? While it may be difficult to admit that any of these limitations may be the reason you are considering euthanasia, they are among the most common reasons for euthanasia.
- 2) Do you have all the medical information from your veterinarian? Anything else you need to know?
- 3) What do you think your pet wants? Is your pet suffering? Can you maintain your pet's normal routines?
- 4) Do you have fears or misconceptions about the euthanasia procedure, about what will happen and what to expect? Do you have special requests for the procedure, but you're not sure you will be allowed/able to include them? If so, talk first with your veterinarian.
- 5) What fears do you have for yourself, your children, or your family regarding this decision? What or who could help you address these fears?
- 6) Will you be present during your pet's euthanasia? Have you and your veterinarian planned and agreed on details like:
 - When and where will the euthanasia will take place?
 - Who will be present? Even if you would prefer to be alone with your pet during this time, consider having a friend accompany you to the euthanasia site and drive you home. Grief brings a sense of disorientation and shock so plan for its effects on your mind and body.
- 7) How will you care for your pet's body? If you don't know your options, discuss them with your veterinarian.

This is a sensitive time. Please remember to take care of yourself and use your resource network to support you.

For more information, visit the Veterinary Wisdom[®] Resource Center at www.veterinarywisdom.com