

Help with end of life care for pets

The UK veterinary industry is in the process of reconsidering its priorities and there is an international movement afoot, urging vets to focus more on providing exceptional end-of-life care for pets and their owners.

In Edinburgh, Dr Margaret Finlay is leading the way with her new veterinary service – a first for the UK as she tells us now:

Many people underestimate the tremendous strength of the bond between people and their pets, and what a devastating impact the loss of that pet can be when the time comes to say goodbye. Within veterinary medicine, the continued drive towards clinical excellence and scientific discovery means that sometimes the respect deserved by that human/animal bond is overlooked.

Every pet owner would prefer their pet to die in its sleep because nobody wants to make the decision to end a life. This is a perfectly normal reaction but unfortunately natural deaths are rarely as peaceful and pain-free as we picture them. Euthanasia, or putting animals to sleep, is without doubt the kindest way to a dignified end for your pet. Until now, the option to say a gentle goodbye to a dear friend in the peaceful and familiar environment of your own home has been very limited. It is often not possible for vets to get away from their busy practices, and there can be high costs involved for pet owners who are interested in a home euthanasia visit.

In recent years, for this very reason, there has been a growing industry around the provision of dedicated, in-home end of life care services in the United States. Why should

people have to go through the anxiety, stress and logistical difficulties of taking their dying companion to the often sterile, anonymous and public environment of a vet practice, when they can have a much more comforting, peaceful, personal and dignified goodbye in the comfort of their own home? Directories such as www.inhomepeteuthanasia.com and www.dignified-departures.co.uk help spread the word and inform pet owners of the availability of such services.

Dr Alicia Harris, founder of <http://www.mycompassionateheart.com>, says that "Our beloved companion animals give us their entire hearts and more. Allowing them to transition in the privacy and comfort of home is the least we can do for them. It's truly a gift."

Meanwhile, the advance of this compassionate and crucial side of veterinary medicine has spread across the Atlantic to the UK where Peaceful Passing (www.peacefulpassing.co.uk), Vets2Home (<http://www.vets2home.co.uk>) and Home Visit Vet (www.homevisitvet.co.uk) are offering similar services to parts of the UK in Edinburgh and the south of England respectively.

Asked about local response to the establishment of such a service in Edinburgh, Dr Margaret Finlay at Peaceful Passing replies, "Response to the launch of Peaceful Passing has been extremely positive with hundreds of supportive messages flooding in within the first few weeks. Once pet owners become or are aware of this option, there is likely to be a significant demand for this service in the UK as well as in the USA. Together with the other vets providing this sort of invaluable service, I believe this difficult event should be calm, unhurried, peaceful and pain free. A time to say goodbye to your pet in a compassionate, gentle and dignified way."

In the words of the internationally loved British vet James

Herriot:

"...to me there has always been a comfort in the knowledge that the last thing these helpless animals knew was the sound of a friendly voice and the touch of a gentle hand."

– James Herriot, All things Wise and Wonderful

Saying goodbye to a friend is never easy, but with the provision of such services and growing awareness in the pet owning public of their availability, a much kinder and supportive option is becoming a real possibility now. It seems inevitable that such services become more widespread around the world in the near future.

Anyone struggling with this difficult situation who is looking for advice and support should contact Margaret Finlay at drfinlay@peacefulpassing.co.uk or visit <http://www.peacefulpassing.co.uk>.

"The phrase 'the ultimate kindness' may sound like a cliché but try to remember that it is true. Allowing your pet a pain-free and dignified end is possibly the kindest thing you will ever do for them."

Submitted by [Margaret Finlay](#)