



How to Handle a Pet's Remains

Deciding whether, or when to euthanize a pet may be the most painful decision a pet owner can face. Saying goodbye to an important relationship can be overwhelming. Many pet owners are unaware that they have options on what happens to their pet's remains. Many pet owners never think about this until the veterinarian asks, "What do you want to do with the remains?". Unfortunately, this is not the best time to think calmly and rationally about all the options available. The emotional situation can lead to a decision that one may later regret.

Asking yourself what you'd like to do with your pet's remains while your pet is alive is one way to avoid an emotional response when the time comes. It's a responsible way of facing, and dealing with a painful reality. It gives you an opportunity to evaluate all the factors that may be involved in such a decision and help you decide how the memory of your pet can best be preserved.

To help, we have listed a few options that might be available to you.

1) Cremation

- a. **Private Cremation.** Private cremations allow you to keep the remains of your pet in an urn or container of your choosing. This is a way to keep your pet at home. Many pet owners will choose this option and later decide to scatter the ashes in a favorite place where the pet loved to play or travel. Scattering the ashes can be a way to symbolize setting the pet free for its final journey—such as in the woods or over a body of water, or just into the wind. Here at MASH we work with Peaceful Pets Aquamation. They are an environmentally friendly company using water flow for natural decomposition. Not only are you able to get your pet's remains back but, they also offer a variety of keep sakes to help you remember your pet.
- b. **Group Cremation.** Deciding not to have your pet's remains returned to you is another option. The cremation company will dispose of the remains for a small fee. You can request other memorabilia such as a paw print or a lock of fur for an additional fee.

2) Burial

Home burial is illegal in Los Angeles county, but there are many options for cemetery burials designated specifically for pets. For many, a formal cemetery burial seems a more fitting tribute. Burial in a pet cemetery ensures that your pet's remains will be undisturbed, and cared for, in perpetuity. Cemetery burial can be a costly option, but many find it a comforting, secure way to handle a pet's remains.

Deciding what to do with your pet's remains doesn't have to be a decision you make on your own. Consider family members and those who were close to the pet. It is important to realize that there is no right or wrong viewpoint in such a discussion. One's feelings about death, and about the remains of the dead, are intensely personal—and in a family discussion about how to handle those remains, everyone's feelings should be respected. It's not easy to talk about a pet's death or use terms like "remains" and "disposal", while that pet is still alive and very much a part of the family but the ultimate decision can have a profound impact on how you, and your family, deal with the loss. Don't leave that decision until the last minute.