

Euthanasia

The term euthanasia comes from Greek terms *eu* meaning good and *thanatos* meaning death. Euthanasia is a topic no one likes to talk about.

Euthanasia is the deliberate humane death of an animal. Euthanasia places an emphasis on making death as painless as possible. Typically, euthanasia is an overdose of anesthesia that suppresses brain activity and stops the heart and breathing of an animal. Once the heart stops, the animal doesn't feel any pain. Death follows shortly, generally in less than a minute.

Why are animals euthanized? Reasons vary.

If there is more pain in an animal's life than pleasure, euthanasia is a kind release. If a pet is terminally ill or critically injured, euthanasia is a valid option. If an animal is vicious, dangerous, unmanageable euthanasia may be the only choice. Sadly there is also the owner facing economic, emotional and space limitation changes that choose to use euthanasia as a solution.

Euthanasia can be one of the kindest things you can do for a beloved pet that is so sick or severely injured that they will never recover a normal healthy life. The decision concerning euthanasia may be one of the most difficult decisions you will ever make. Quality of life is important to your pet. While being a personal decision, your veterinarian will help you decide what is best for your pet. Your veterinarian understands attachments to pets and can evaluate your pet's chance of recovery. While your veterinarian cannot make the euthanasia decision for you, they can help you understand your pet's condition.

Children have special relationships with their pets and should be considered in the decision-making process. Excluding or protecting children because they are too young to understand may only complicate their grieving. Children deserve respect and truthful, simple answers. Children are usually able to accept a pet's death, if prepared adequately. Never lie to a child about the death of their pet.

Euthanasia is also used by Animal Shelters and Humane Societies faced with the daunting problem of pet overpopulation. Euthanasia is directly related to how many pets are born every year. Millions are born and millions are euthanized every year. There are just not enough homes for the amount of pets born each year. One example of the problem poses that it would require every person in the US to own seven pets, at once, each to provide homes for all the animals born.

In animal shelters, you will find dedicated animal lovers who have to make difficult choices every day. Are shelters cold and uncaring, using euthanasia to get populations down any way they can? Absolutely not. Shelter personnel are faced with the stress of deciding who lives and dies. Shelter personnel go through the grieving process for animals they may have known only a few days. But for a

loving owner, an owner who cared enough to spay/neuter, an owner who cared enough to train the animal, a responsible owner who took the time to make the right choice of animal for them...the decision would not have to be made to humanely euthanized an animal to make room for the hundreds coming behind them.

If pets were kept until adopted, as in "no kill" shelters, the most desirable pets would be adopted first leaving behind the less desirable. Eventually a no kill shelter would only have un-adoptable pets.

If a shelter accepts only desirable pets, where do the less desirable pets go? The choice is euthanasia or abandonment to the elements. An animal euthanized in a shelter is done so humanely. Abandonment involves pain, illness, disease, starvation and a horrific death.

As humans we have the responsibility, that if an animal's life is to be taken, that it be done with the highest degree of respect, as painless and as distress free as possible.