

Making the necessary decisions when your pet is sick,
may mean making the most difficult and painful decisions you will ever make.

The staff at Bush Veterinary Neurology Service (BVNS) recognizes and understands this. While we are experts in veterinary neurology and medical care, we are also pet owners and pet lovers who have lost pets of our own. We hope that this resource helps you through this very difficult time.

The decisions you face at the end of your pet's life are never easy. Your veterinarian can discuss alternatives and the prognosis for your pet but it is also important for you to know that your feelings of grief, sadness and fear are both normal and healthy. In addition to these resources, please seek the support of your friends, loved ones, support groups and healthcare professionals. The support of these resources will not replace the loss of a loved one but they can provide comfort.



Our complete Pet Loss Resource can be found
online at: www.bvns.net/pet_loss

Final Words

While everyone grieves differently, everyone still grieves. Grief over the loss of a friend, family member or pet is a normal and natural part of loss, although normal and natural do not make it easy. We hope that through your grieving process the resources, words and thoughts we've included will help. No words can replace your loss or remove your burden but we hope that through these resources you can share your grief, learn from others and also help others who are also suffering.

*“Unable are the loved to die,
For love is immortality.”*

- Emily Dickinson



We are sorry for your loss and if the staff at BVNS can be of any help, please feel free to contact us.



Pet Loss Resources
a guide for end-of-life care



Understanding Euthanasia & Loss

If your pet is a client at BVNS and the prognosis or progression of disease makes euthanasia a consideration, we will honor your wishes and ensure your pet's suffering is ended painlessly and quickly.

Here is a brief description of the process:

Many owners wish to be present for the euthanasia process and find that it helps to provide some closure at the end of their pet's life. You have the option to be present during this process and to visit with your pet before and after the procedure for as long as you may need.

The euthanasia process involves the veterinarian administering a medication into the vein; this medication will cause a decrease in breathing, heart rate and neurologic function. The process is completely painless and takes less than one minute from when the injection is given to end your pet's suffering.

Prior to administration of this medication, we will want to be sure that your pet has an intravenous catheter in place. The placement of a catheter ensures that the medication is given properly. Additionally, the veterinarian may administer

a sedative medication prior to giving the euthanasia.

After your pet is euthanized, you may wish to have your pet's remains cremated or you may want to take the body home for a private burial. If you decide to have your pet's remains cremated, BVNS will gladly coordinate and organize this for you so that you can mourn your loss. We at BVNS are always trying to learn more from our patients in order to advance the diagnosis and treatment of neurologic disease. Therefore, we may request to obtain a partial post mortem examination, in order to obtain tissue for further analysis and help to obtain a more definitive diagnosis. This procedure is optional, only performed with your permission and is performed free of charge.



Understanding Grief

Your feelings of sadness, despair, anger, frustration and depression are both normal and healthy. Whenever we face or experience a loss, the process of grieving helps us memorialize our lost loved one, helps us understand our loss and helps us love again.

Just as words cannot replace your loss, words cannot remove your grief. However, understanding grief and the grieving process can sometimes help us navigate the process. Here are a few very important points for you to consider:

Grief is normal. *Your feelings of loss and sadness are a healthy part of coping with your loss. Ignoring these feelings can be unhealthy and can extend or prolong the grieving process. If possible, discuss how you feel with friends, family or a professional counselor.*

Everyone Grieves. *While many of us choose to hide our feelings and ignore our grief, we all grieve. The way one individual grieves may be different than how you grieve. This is normal and should be expected.*

If Necessary, Seek Help. *Because sadness and depression are often a profound component of loss, you may find that your grief makes it hard to return to your normal lifestyle. If your grief is extended or affects your ability to function, you may want to consider seeking professional support. There is never a need to suffer in silence or isolation, so please seek out support and assistance.*

Grief and Children. *Children often do not understand loss and may feel confused or even ashamed of how they feel. It is important that children receive support so that they understand their emotions, the process of grieving and have a chance to ask questions about loss.*

Remembrance and Memorialization. *While grief may be filled with sadness and loss, it can also be a time of love, hope and happiness. Remembering your pet, your love for them and the happiness your relationship created is an important part of grief and an important part of returning to your normal lifestyle. Because you may not be aware of the options you have to remember and memorialize your loved one, we have included a summary of some resources on our website. Please visit:*

www.bvns.net/pet_loss

Would you like a custom paw print to memorialize your pet? Please ask a BVNS staff member about custom Paw Prints from Peartree Studio.

Cremation, Burial and Memorial Services

For some, a photo is enough but for many there is a strong desire to have a more permanent reminder. There are many local organizations that can assist you with how you handle the remains of your pet. These organizations can provide burial, cremation, remembrance and memorialization services. Please refer to our site for the latest information on these organizations.

Local and National Support

In addition to the Pet Loss Resources that we have organized on our website, these resources are also available for your support:

Local Telephone Hotlines

PAL: People Animals Love Pet Loss Comfort Line

Phone: 202.966.2171 - Leave a message if calling after hours. Your phone call will be returned promptly.

Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine

Phone: 540.231.8038 - Available to answer calls Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6-9pm. Messages may be left at this number during other times and Hot Line personnel will call you back during operating hours. All information is strictly confidential.

National Telephone Hotlines

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

Phone: 1.877.GRIEF-10 (1.877.474.3310) - This is a direct line to ASPCA's psychologist and grief counselor, Dr. Stephanie LaFarge, PhD.



Would you like your pet included in our online memorial? We would be honored and happy to share your pet's story. To be included, please send us a picture and any information you would like included to us at: petloss@bvns.net