

Tails From The Crypt

By Phil Tripp

In a way, we were lucky. Unlike many people who arrive home to find their pet has passed away unexpectedly or is hit by a car, we had the fortune to be prepared for our pets' passing.

Where our first elderly dog Mick got sick and was euthanised the same day with Lisa cradling him, the arrangements for cremation were handled by the lovely folks at the University of Sydney Vet Clinic. We had a room where he lay comfortably and passed away and then he was left behind to be removed, taken away to a cremator and returned in a nice plastic box.

With Jerri, who had also packed in 13 great years, we knew well ahead of time that she would most likely drop dead from cardiomyopathy (enlarged heart) and that it would be sudden, unexpected and from time of her diagnosis, could be a couple of days, a couple of weeks, maybe even a couple of months. We considered ourselves blessed that she lasted over four months and was in the care of friends before she was dropped back to our home and office where she passed away quietly in the back garden just a few hours before we returned from an overseas holiday.

I had already done my homework in one sense because I had handled the chore of Lisa's mother passing away six months prior when, at the request of the five daughters, I negotiated the details between the Melbourne hospital and crematorium for her final trip back to New Zealand in an urn. At that time, I found it far easier to find information on pet cremation on the Internet than the human variety. I had to be emotionless, even mercenary in dealing with seven different funeral directors before I got the price down from \$15,000 as was suggested as an appropriate send off, to a mere \$1500 inc GST for the very simple, uncomplicated cremation and container.

So knowing what lay ahead for Jerri and realising it would not happen at a vet but at home, I researched Sydney pet cremation services so as to be prepared for making that awful call. There were seven that I checked out on the Internet, through pet industry contacts and by personal phone calls. I settled on one that I felt comfortable with. It was a combination of an email under another name that I sent followed by a quick and caring response to it and my subsequent conversation.

As it turned out, Jerri's carer found out about her death shortly after dropping her off and to make it easier on us, did the same sort of research in a few hours as I had done over the course of a week, four months earlier. It was comforting to know that she came up with the same result as I had.

Without being morbid, this is what you really need to know and consider in dealing with a prepared or sudden death of a loved pet. Realise first that dogs and cats do not live as long as we do and it is better to be prepared than caught off guard. It's easy in grief to overlook expenses and find that what you paid for may have been more than what you wanted or not what you wanted at all.

You need to choose, in advance, what you want to have done when your pet passes away. Do you want to have your pet buried or cremated? Do you want to have it interred in a pet cemetery? Do you want an individual funeral service or simply having the pet taken away and cremated? Do you want a headstone or memorial? These are all added costs and can get steep.

Most people elect not to do more than have the vet handle disposal of the body but for those that do want something special cremation, runs at \$200-\$400 depending on the choice of receptacle while pet funerals and burial starts at about \$500 and average \$700 or more.

If you opt for cremation, the options for return are simple as there are a variety of containers for the storage and display of your pet whether it's an urn or in our case, a lovely brass inlaid hardwood box with nameplate. You can also opt for a scatter box if you want to spread the ashes in a special place. You may not want to have the ashes returned but simply know that your pet was appropriately taken care of after passing on.



The Pet Cremation Specialist

Petrest has been serving your local Veterinary practice and the community at large for the past 55 years. Ask your Vet for more information on Petrest's wide range of individual cremation services or simply call one of our friendly staff.

1800 673 373
www.petrest.com.au enquiries@petrest.com.au



Your pet deserves the cremation service Vets recommend.



Marching Into Pet Heaven by Mary Faustine

The service you want to consider, should you need it, would involve picking up your pet from home or vet or other location. With due respect to vets and their need to bill for services, if you can, you should consider making this arrangement directly with a company that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Where possible, same day collection is desirable and if being taken from your home, as we did, the way the pet is handled and removed is crucial to the closure of its passing.

You really want to have guaranteed individual cremation as in some cases, especially where pets have been collected from vets or university vet schools, they may be cremated en masse and combined ashes allocated to those who request them. We made sure our provider guaranteed this.

You will also want return of your pet's ashes quickly, within a few days, to help get through the grief process and in a container that you feel comfortable with. Some of the services we checked out had 24 hour counselling and grief support referral service numbers. Others simply had brochures or a special section on their website. It's at this time that a caring cost-effective professional makes all the difference between expensive suffering and a sad transition that is appreciated despite the loss.

What you don't need and shouldn't tolerate are expensive and inappropriate add ons that are pitched to with any pressure. What you do need to determine is a budget you will follow and a written quote so that you have it to refer to when the time comes. You should check the websites of different service providers as costs are often outlined there including the range of caskets, scatter boxes and services rendered.

Pet cremation services normally deal with dogs and cats but can also handle other mammals, reptiles and even birds. I know that at my age, it is likely that my parrots will outlive me but in case they don't, I have a lovely spot in the garden for them. It's less expensive than my wife's idea of entombing the bird in a Faberge egg and burial on your own property is completely legal in NSW. I really couldn't deal with taxidermy.

Which brings us to a point and our closure. One of the things we considered was what would happen to our pets if Lisa and I both passed away suddenly. Because we have a young dog (about to get a puppy) and our parrots will live between 20-40 years, we have made legal and financial arrangements for their care. We will share this with you in our next issue and show you how you can easily do it to avoid problems that would then be out of your control.