

SAYING GOODBYE TO YOUR CHERISHED PET IN THE COMFORT OF HOME

Euthanasia, the practice of intentionally ending a life in order to relieve pain and suffering, is a service offered at every veterinary hospital and clinic. Although most hospitals and clinics try to make the process as stress-free and comfortable as possible, many pet owners yearn for something less clinical, more intimate and private, and stress-free for their pet.

Jana Josel, DVM, is the owner of **Cali's Way**, a service that provides in-home euthanasia and hospice care for small animals. She started her service as a result of a very moving euthanasia experience, one she felt was important enough to share with other pet owners.

What made you decide to do in-home euthanasia exclusively?

It all started when my sister-in-law's beloved 18-year-old cat Cali, was dying of kidney failure. Dreading the inevitable, it was even more upsetting to Jennifer that she would have to say goodbye to Cali at her veterinary clinic. It was then that I decided to help Cali, and the many others that have since followed, leave this world in the comfort and security of their own home. There would be no stressful car ride, no strange animals or noises around—just the company of those that loved her the deepest, in the place that made her the most comfortable and secure. We said goodbye to Cali in privacy and peace, knowing she left this world painlessly and stress-free. I have since had my own dog, Miles, put to sleep in my home, and I could not have imagined doing it any other way, a sentiment shared by many of my clients.

It seems like it would be hard to perform euthanasia in general. How do you feel about them? Have they become routine to you at this point?

People often say to me “this must be hard for you to do.” Witnessing the impact that the death of a cherished pet has on its family is always painful. I try to be strong for the family, but sometimes I cry. I try to think a little less about me and a little more about my clients and my patient. I often remind myself that what I am giving is a gift – the gift of compassion, relieving a loved one of their pain and suffering. The word “euthanasia” comes from the Greek for “good death.” Understanding this makes what I do just a little less difficult. And when so many of my clients say “I'm so glad she's not suffering any more,” “thank you for making this so peaceful,” “this is the best thing anyone could have ever done for me,” and, most importantly, “I'm so glad we were able to do this at home,” the hard part becomes less so.

Can you explain the euthanasia procedure?

I first give a strong sedative via injection underneath the skin that produces a deep state of sleep and analgesia (lack of pain). This injection usually takes anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes to take effect. The second and last injection goes directly in a vein and will stop the heart usually within 30 seconds. It is a very quiet and peaceful passing.

What happens to the pet once the euthanasia is completed?

Most frequently, owners choose one of two types of cremation for their pet. Individual cremation refers to the pet being placed in the cremation unit alone and the owner receiving the ashes back in a number of days. Group cremation refers to the pet being cremated with other pets and no ashes being returned to the owner. If cremation is chosen, I take the pet with me to Hartsdale Pet Cemetery for cremation. Within 1-2 weeks, the ashes will be ready – in most cases I return them to the owner. Other options are available—please refer to my website at calis-way.com for more information.

Performing euthanasias must be stressful. How do you cope with these feelings?

Around 10 years ago, right after graduating vet school, I realized that the everyday emotional ups and downs of medicine was taking a toll on my body and mind. I started practicing yoga as a way to de-stress and de-clutter my mind, as well as to create stamina to help me through long, crazy days (and nights) at the hospital. Yoga became such an important part of my life that I recently became a certified yoga instructor, deepening my practice and my understanding of yogic philosophy. I credit my practice for allowing me to keep my sanity and perspective in check, and for reminding me to breathe and act with intention.

What areas do you serve? And how can you be contacted for your services?

I serve all of Westchester, Rockland, and Bronx counties as well as the upper part of Manhattan. I am available outside of these areas for a surcharge. Additional information including hours of service and fees can be found at calis-way.com. I can be reached via email at drjana@calis-way.com (email is preferable) or via my phone service at 914-517-2917. I work hard to accommodate clients' needs and set up appointments within hours of the visit if needed as well as days and even weeks away. I also offer hospice care for owners that prefer to treat their pets at home until it is time to put them to sleep.

Dr. Josel lives in Ardsley with her husband Ben, her son Noah, two dogs—Simon & Sidney, two cats—Cleo & Juno, and two chinchillas—Boris & Bolt.