

CANINE CORNER

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Home euthanasia



When 15-year old Baxter started withdrawing from activity and refusing food, his Mum asked her long-standing veterinary practice about home euthanasia. The clinic replied that it could not offer a house call and that Baxter would need to be brought to the clinic at a scheduled time. This answer created a lot of angst in Baxter's household, since his parents were concerned about his stress and pain levels and because it felt wrong to say goodbye to their dog in a sterile clinic setting.

Enter Our Pet's Goodbye, an in-home euthanasia practice operated by veterinarians Nic Macdonald and Caroline Whitty. Nic came to the family home to meet Baxter and his family and, after a chat, it was time to say goodbye to Baxter in a way that was calm and

peaceful for all involved.

"A busy veterinary practice often can't accommodate a house call", says Nic.

"Practices are increasingly expensive to maintain as there is a drive for more sophisticated diagnostics, equipment and post-op care and monitoring", adds Caroline. "The standard of care is higher than, say, 20 years ago. You just can't leave the practice with a nurse/receptionist in charge to do a house call."

Beyond the time pressures on veterinary clinics, the closure of New Zealand's border due to COVID-19 has meant that non-resident veterinarians have stopped coming to New Zealand for working holidays, nor can they be recruited for permanent roles. The skill shortage is very real.

Between them, Nic and Caroline have over 35 years of veterinary experience in after-hours, surgical and mainstream clinical care. They know a thing or two about 'good' and 'bad' euthanasia experiences and about running clinics, generally.

"There's less reluctance to refer to a euthanasia-only mobile service", explains Nic, "because we don't offer any mainstream veterinary care that could be seen as competition and because house calls are a service that they cannot routinely provide. Also, removing euthanasia from a clinic can actually be good for business. An owner's memories of a clinic euthanasia and the circumstances leading up to it may mean that the owner does not return to that clinic for care of future pets."

Dealing with a pet's death is an inevitable fact of life. Nic and Caroline recommend that people seek information about euthanasia

in advance which will allow them to enjoy the time they have left.

"It can actually be an almost rewarding and special experience to go through death in a peaceful way with the animal you love. It's always going to be sad, but it doesn't have to be a bad memory", emphasises Caroline.

"It is a privilege to be there and let an animal who is suffering go peacefully."

Home euthanasia services are both popular and the norm in countries such as the US and the UK. New Zealand is catching up and so it is worthwhile doing an Internet search for home euthanasia services available in your area. 🐾