

Who Cares for Us When Our Pets Die?



Mike and I recently have been working with Cherie at [Paws to Angels](#) in Omaha to arrange and plan for the death care of our pets. This is not a topic that anyone really wants to talk about, but it's inevitable and I believe worthy of consideration.

I don't have much experience losing a pet as an adult, but I can clearly remember how I felt when confronted with all the decisions that I needed to make when my beloved cat, Elsie passed away after nineteen years.

I was lucky, she died at home in her sleep; it was not unexpected. Still I had no idea what I should do with her body other than I knew I wanted her cremated and wanted to keep her ashes. Beyond that, I was naive. I learned that there were a couple different cremation options that I could use, I chose to drop off Elsie's body at my vet office and have them take it from there. I never really considered what would happen between the time that I dropped off her body and picked up her remains.

What I didn't know was that she was most likely placed in a plastic bag and frozen for transport. She was then loaded on a truck with dozens of other frozen bodies and taken to the crematorium. I don't remember what crematorium I chose, but I am sure that it was a facility that did not have had a process in place to guarantee that the remains I received back were actually hers or hers alone.

Elsie was special girl. I rescued her when she was abandoned with her litter mates at a Walt Disney World kennel. She was with me through nineteen year of my life... through boyfriends, job changes,



moving eleven times covering six states, a failed marriage and all the life in between. She deserved more than what I gave her.

Options, like we have today, didn't exist then. The above scenario has been the extent of our pet's death care for many years. Times change, we now have alternatives. For some people the old standard is fine. It's just not fine for me.

I am thrilled that professional and quality pet death care is now an option in some cities. But this is important - we, as pet parents, need to be educated on these options and be prepared to verbalize what we want when the time comes. This is our responsibility to the four legged friends that we love.

Thinking clearly isn't always easy, especially when you don't expect to have to make it. This is why I'm writing on this topic, this is why I am encouraging you to do your research. Visit facilities, ask about their availability and after care options. Prepare yourself so when the time does come, you can focus on your family, your loss and your grief rather than stressing over a snap decision while standing in the vet office while you're grieving.

What Paws to Angels provides pet parents in the Omaha area is access to professionally managed services, dignified cremation, burial and memorial options, grief support and compassion.

If your pet dies at your vet office, you can call Paws to Angels 24/7 and they will be there within minutes. I have the number saved in my phone. When they arrive, your pet will be swaddled in blankets and will rest in a casket. You can send along a toy or bone or any sort of memento if you wish. Once at the Paws to Angels location, your pet will be placed in a cooler, not frozen. You might elect to have family visitation at a later time when you're all ready.

I guess the most important service for me is that I know I can call Cherie at any time, seven days a week and she will take care of everything for me. I'll speak to her, not an answering machine or to someone who doesn't understand or care about what I'm going through. I don't need to load up my pet's body on my own and take him somewhere, I don't need to make a quick decision. I have choices.

I heard first hand from a woman whose husband was traveling for business. Their pet had to be euthanized unexpectedly while he was gone. She was overwhelmed with grief and guilt and her husband never really got closure he never got to say 'good bye'.

Tragically, I recently witnessed a little dog get hit by a car. The little dog's family was trying to entice him to come to them when this happened.

They all witnessed the death. The children were devastated and saw the horror of the impact on his little body.

If this family chose to use the services of Paws to Angels, Cherie would have bathed or sewn up the little dog and allowed the family time for visitation so that the lasting memory would be one of peace.



[Paws to Angels](#) offers support groups, funeral services, memorial services, a chapel, a visitation room as well as a vast selection of caskets, urns, markers, monuments.

[Taysia Blue Siberian Husky Rescue](#) has committed to use the services of Paws to Angels for any of the dogs in our care. We have experienced the wonderful level of service and care for Maya and for Denali.

Denali passed away at 7:45 in the morning at the emergency vet. The vet office called me to let me know. I knew that Denali's foster family was on their way so I asked them to not bag him or freeze him. I told them that I would call Paws to Angels right away and she would be there shortly. The woman on the phone told that they closed in fifteen minutes and that we would have to pick him up (frozen and bagged) at 6:00 p.m. that evening.

I reminded them that they had fifteen minutes left of business hours, I would take my chances on Cherie being there in time.

Clearly the clinic wanted the family to wrap up their good byes so they could go home for the day. Cherie arrived with time to spare and was able to take Denali with her and the clinic was not inconvenienced. For the family, they had a rushed good bye at the clinic, they wanted more than the five minutes with their sweet dog and they wanted the opportunity to give their boys a chance to say good bye. Paws to Angels was able to provide that for them.

Denali's death was shocking, devastating and the family was rushed, but with the services of Paws to Angels, the family was able to grieve and heal on their terms and in the time that they needed.

I know I sound like I'm selling this service and maybe I am, but my dogs are my family and they deserve an appropriate level of care after they are gone. I also know that if you're reading this, you probably feel the same way. It is our responsibility as pet parents to research and pre-plan for this time. As difficult as it sounds, you will be glad you did.

Posted 5th November 2012 by [Jackie Roach](#)