

The TLC Your Pet Yearns for During Her Last Weeks and Days on Earth

It's sad for both you and your pet. But you'll be glad knowing you did these things to bring her maximum comfort and were a blessing during her final days on earth. After all, she's been a devoted companion for years. Here's how she'd like to be comforted during these trying days.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- It's tough to think about your pet's life coming to an end, but as your dog's or cat's guardian, I know you want to make sure she's comfortable and at peace during her final days
- Just as you've provided good health and a good life for your pet, you'll want to provide her a good end of life as well; the best way to do this is to be aware of what to look for and have a plan
- My Winding Down webinar covers many of the difficult topics involved in the death of a pet, including what to expect from her aging body, when and how to transition from preventive to comfort care and the dying process

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- Life is a process. Death is a process. Grief is a process.
- It's normal to have intense emotions and to cry. Don't try to push your feelings aside, and don't imagine there's some unwritten rule for how much or how long you should grieve.
- Learning what to expect at the end of your pet's life, and what you can do to help him — and yourself — in his final weeks, days and hours is empowering.
- Try to view this last chapter in your furry companion's life with feelings of gratitude and peace, rather than fear.

At some point in your pet's life, it becomes time to switch from providing preventive care, to providing **comfort care**. This means switching from being proactive in slowing the degenerative process, to making him feel comfortable without interfering with the winding down process.

As you can probably imagine, this transition can be very difficult for devoted guardians accustomed to doing everything possible to maintain and enhance their pet's health. But at some point, your dog's or cat's body will no longer be willing or able to participate in this endeavor.

It's important to understand that offering comfort care isn't about giving up; it's about switching gears and making how your dog or cat FEELS in her body your top priority. This could mean, for example, stopping acupuncture treatments because your kitty no longer tolerates them, or stopping that supplement mixed with your dog's food so he'll eat more.

It can also mean giving your pet a drug you object to that helps his body feel good. You're no longer thinking about long-term side effects; you're only thinking about right now, this minute and how you can make your dog or cat feel as good as she can feel.

What You'll Learn During My Winding Down Webinar

The webinar is divided into three main sections:

1. The aging body

- Aging organ systems
- Aging senses
- Symptoms of aging
- Helping your pet feel better

2. The fork in the road: when preventive care stops and comfort care starts

- Biggest hurdles
- How to know when it's happening
- Two categories of veterinarians
- Scenarios to think about

3. How pets die: crisis versus the "slow fade"

- Slow fade
- Navigating the ER
- Hospice care
- Euthanasia myths
- The cycle of grief

Just as you've provided your animal companion with good health and a good life, at the end of his time here on earth, it's equally important to help him have a good death. I encourage you to grab a cup of tea and a handful of tissues, sit back and learn what you need to know about how to help your furry family member through the final chapter of his life.
