



Companion Animal

Advance Care Directives

WORKBOOK



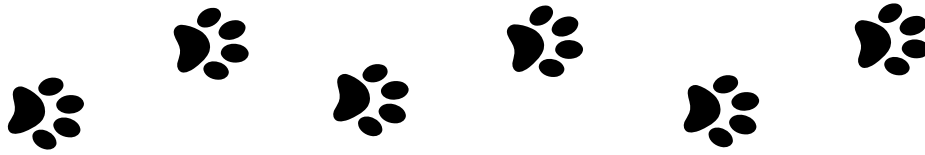
Companion Animal Advanced Directive

*A guide to support you and your pet as you
approach their end-of-life*

The most loving gesture we can do for our companion animal is also the most difficult. Planning for our pet's end-of-life is something that we would rather not think about, but it is necessary to consider. By looking ahead, we can honor our beloved animal by taking the time to talk about different options and avoid making last-minute decisions.

By using this document as a guide, you can be better prepared for the situations that may arise during this time in your companion animal's life. Having a plan in place will help you to navigate with clearer intention and will free you to be fully present with your pet during their journey.

These are challenging and emotional conversations to have and it's natural to want to postpone them for as long as we can. Completing this form when your pet is young and healthy can provide peace of mind. A Companion Animal Doula can gently support you along the way, share resources and options, and ensure that these considerations are made well before you need them.



Welcoming a beloved pet into our families is one of the most unconditional and loving experiences that we can have in our lifetimes. Although our pets do not leave behind legal or financial obligations, we can still better prepare ourselves, and them, by having these conversations and plans in place.

Make sure to keep a copy of this directive with your other personal important documents. Consider sharing copies with:

- A trusted friend or family member
- Your veterinarian
- Other animal caregivers such as groomers, trainers and boarders

DOULA TIP:

Remember to include your pets in your own advance directives plans.

Do you have a caregiver named who will take on your pets should you pass away?

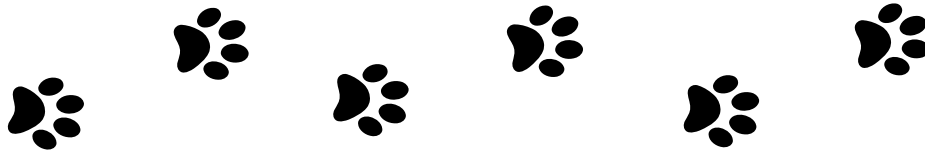
Do you have funds set aside for their care?

Create Detailed Care Instructions: Outline your pet's daily routine, including feeding schedules, dietary requirements, exercise needs, and any specific medical conditions or medications they may have. Include the contact information of their veterinarian and any preferences for healthcare decisions. Include a letter of permission for your caretaker to bring to the veterinarian in your absence.

Reflection Page

Use this page to reflect on your time with your pet, share memories and make notes of items that are important to you and your family as you make your way through this workbook.





This workbook is divided into three sections: **Before**, **During**, and **After** death.

It is meant to create considerations and talking points for discussion and planning purposes and is not exhaustive.

For help in completing this document, you may benefit from reaching out to your end-of-life doula for companion animals for guidance and resources.

Created by doulas, this document is provided as a non-medical complementary resource and is not meant to replace professional veterinary care. Please reach out to your veterinary professional with any questions or concerns first.

This time in your pet's life can be very difficult to navigate both emotionally and mentally. It may be beneficial to consult with a pet loss and bereavement specialist or mental health professional to support you and your family through the grief process.

Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement

www.aplb.org

Mental Health America

www.mhanational.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov



Before...

Pre-planning discussions, so everyone is on the same page going forward, is vitally important to the peace and reverence this time of life deserves. Pre-planning considerations will also help you create memories and remembrances of this very sacred time with your pet. Also, as you consider all possible aspects, you can be better prepared should an emergency arise.

- Create a bucket list of your pet's favorite things to do, eat, play. What are your favorite things to do with your pet?

These will be special moments to share with your pet now and as time of end of life draws closer. Remember to take pictures with your cell phone or camera, write about them, and create happy memories.

- Make an appointment to have a family portrait done with your pet.

Decision making:

When will be the right time?

Consider age-related degeneration, cancer or other health diagnosis, debilitating accident, injury, etc. Do you have the financial resources to support a lengthy illness? Is the home set up to support the care the pet will need? How will this affect other pets in the home? Other family members and children?

Do you want to have your pet enter hospice if their illness will be lengthy? This can be of great support to your pet, your family, and you.

NOTE: Animal hospice is a type of care and support, rather than an actual place. Deciding if this is an option for your pet and finding the resources needed ahead of time will be necessary and may take time. Start by asking your Veterinarian if they can support this service or know another that can.

Do you want your veterinarian to perform the euthanasia procedure?

Considerations: Will they come to the home, and if not, do they have a private and separate place in the clinic? Can you bring comfort items from home, perform rituals and meaning making if desired? May you bring others to support you? Are other family pets welcome to attend? How much time will you be allowed to be with your pet?

Create an emergency plan with your Veterinary Staff. Know where to go if the emergency happens on off hours.

Do you want to use a pet crematorium? Or an aquamation facility?

Research options in your area to find out what services they offer. Some can assist with transportation and memorial services. Many will have choices for vessels and memorial items such as jewelry and urns.

Would you like to have a home funeral for your pet?

Do you have a special place that is meaningful to you and your pet? Do you want to arrange for euthanasia to be performed there?

Consider plans for remains and memory items:

If cremated, do you want your pet's ashes back? Do you prefer group or individual cremation? Do you want to transport your pet's remains to the crematorium or would you like help with transportation? Would you like to have paw or nose prints, a lock of fur or hair?

NOTE: Group cremation ashes are not returned but are often more affordable. Ashes are returned only for individual or private cremation.

If you choose internment of your pet at your personal property, be sure to reach out to diggers hotline and check your township, city and county ordinances as well as Home Owners Associations before you begin your ceremony.

ACTION ITEM: Create a resource list from the information gathered above with phone numbers and addresses.

Have a family discussion about rituals and how to support meaning making. Write these ideas down. **Create an “end-of-life kit”** of what you need and a list of what needs to be added as the time draws close. This will allow you to be prepared whether at home, if you are going to your veterinary clinic, or in the event of an emergency to go elsewhere.

Considerations: special toys or belongings, comforting music you want played, poems or prayers that can support you during and afterwards, candles or diffusers, a notebook and pen, clay nose or paw print kits. Complementary support services like massage, Reiki, and acupuncture can be healing additions at this time.

Self-care and the care of your entire family is also important at this time.

Who are your support people? How can they help? Make a list of restaurants that offer take out or delivery, daily living tasks, mental health professionals, and grocery items so they can help without bothering you. On that list, have the location of your end-of-life kit and resource lists.

What will you do to support yourself and your family? Make a list of resources. This can include services like massage, Reiki, mental support professionals, personal comfort items, food and drink items, music, books, notebook and paper for writing thoughts, for example. Knowing what you can do for you and your family to support healthy self-care is vital to moving through this time. You cannot support your pet if you are not emotionally and mentally well.

**“Until one has loved an animal,
a part of one’s soul remains
unawakened.”**

– Anatole France

Before notes...





During...

During the time approaching end-of-life and at euthanasia, your Before section will help you to remain as fully present with your pet as you can be. No amount of planning will ease the pain of this time in our pet's life. However, having a plan in place will help free yourself of having to attend to details, be prepared for any emergency situations that may come up, and be better prepared to support and honor your beloved pet as they transition through their end-of-life experience.

Reach out to your support people, choose an end-of-life doula for companion animals if you wish, and implement your self care lists. Depending on what circumstances brought you to this time in your pet's life, you will want to start reaching out to your support people for help. Know where this directive is and the lists you have created, and share these with your support people.

Reach out to your chosen companion animal doula to help coordinate this care for you and your pet and to support your pet, you, and your family. It is important to bring in this help to assure you are taking care of yourself as well. When we are focused on the death of our pet, we need those around us to watch over us and keep us, our family, and our resident pets well.

Be mindful of the ebb and flow of this journey. There will be happy times and sad times, and times when you wish it was done, and times you hope the end of life will never arrive. This is all very normal. Be gentle with yourself as you travel this path with your pet.

Have your mental health professional's information handy for the times that you need. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to reach out for help. This grief is very real and intense.

During notes...





After...

After your companion animal has passed, there will be immediate and long lasting grief in varying stages. This is normal and will take as much time as it needs.

With the help of your support people and your chosen doula, implement your plans for memorializing, rituals, ceremonies, and burials or internments. Allow yourself to feel and express all the emotions that come to you. Share your thoughts and feelings by talking with your family, your mental health professional, your support people, and your doula. This is an important part of the grieving process. It also helps your support team to learn what you need and how best to support you.

Consider writing and sharing an obituary for your beloved animals.

How would you like to handle your pet's belongings after they have passed? Keep in mind that routines or immediate actions involving your pet's items may bring strong emotions to the surface. Would you like to keep a beloved toy or special collar? Would you like to donate items to a shelter or rescue organization? A doula can help share options and make these arrangements for you.

Are there others that you would like to be notified after your pet has died? For example veterinary clinics, groomers, trainers, boarding facility, walkers, friends from dog parks, and special family and friends. Your doula may be able to contact these people for you.

Continue your self-care plan and be gentle with yourself, your family, and your resident pets. Know that grief is fluid and will take many shapes and emotions over time. Be aware of your children and your resident pets, they too will grieve and will need support. This may be the time to reach out to your mental health professional for support.

After notes...



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*Workbook created in collaboration by
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Kathy has been a holistic dog trainer for more than 10 years. Her focus is helping clients build a loving relationship with their companion animal first and foremost. She is also an Animal Reiki Practitioner certified in the Let Animals Lead Method® developed by Kathleen Prasad and a graduate of the Companion Animal Doula program through the University of Vermont.

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Angela is an end-of-life doula and companion animal doula. She is an instructor for the End-of-Life Doula and Companion Animal Doula programs at the University of Vermont and the former president of the National End-of-Life Doula Alliance. She is also the veterinary doula at Pet Well Mobile Vet. She serves on the Charlevoix Area Humane Society Board of Directors.