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Fitting farewell

Veterinarians in region say at-home euthanasia takes some of the stress out of a difficult time

By Makayla-Courtney McGeeney Updated 4:03 pm, Tuesday, August 12, 2014



IMAGE 1 OF 4

Dr. Roger Blankfein is pictured with his dog Gavin Thursday morning, June 26, 2014, at his home in Delmar, N.Y. Dr. Blankfein runs an in-home euthanasia business. (Selby Smith / Special to the Times Union)

A pet's last moments shouldn't be rushed, says Roger Blankfein, a Delmar veterinarian, and so he has begun offering one of the most emotionally difficult procedures — euthanasia — in the comfort of customers' homes.

He's one of a few Capital Region veterinarians now offering in-home euthanasia to ailing animals, saying it makes the transition easier on both the patient and their grieving owners.

"I find it an honor to be asked to perform such an important and sacred task," Blankfein says.

His priority is to make sure families are able to be with their pets in the final moments in a private and peaceful area. He wants the pet to be under their favorite tree or on their favorite couch, wherever is most comfortable.

Most of Blankfein's clients have notified their primary vet about the process, and in some cases, the vet has worked with Blankfein to prescribe medication to make the animal content prior to euthanasia. When Blankfein arrives at a home appointment, he dresses in street clothes, to avoid anxiety a white coat and scrubs could provoke in a family member or the pet.

More Information

Looking for more information?

These websites may be able to help:

Roger Blankfein:

<http://www.inthecomfortofhome.com>

Nicole L. LaMora:

<http://www.mobilepetvetny.com>

Sarah Nolan:

<http://www.capitaldistrictmobilevet.com>

A clinical setting, with its activity, noise and frightening and unfamiliar scents, can be agitating to a dog or cat, he says.

"Pet euthanasia is really something that should never be rushed," he says. "And, in fact, I think one of the greatest advantages of my service is that I can dedicate as much time as people need to say goodbye. I always enjoy

listening to their stories about their pets."

Claire Miller of Albany used Blankfein's services for her 16-year-old cat, Ronnie, who was suffering from cancer.

"Dr. Blankfein handled everything and it took our minds off of dealing with the logistics and paperwork," she says. "It's a difficult thing to recommend, and

you wouldn't want anyone to go through it, but the doctor is a very kind and compassionate medical expert. It's an invaluable service to families and helped us with our grief immensely."

Veterinarian Nicole L. LaMora of The Mobile Pet Vet, located in Pittstown, runs her entire business on wheels and makes in-home visits for most services, including euthanasia. She caters mostly to pets that don't travel well, housebound owners, multiple pet households and people who don't have time to sit in a waiting room at the vet hospital.

"I started this service in the first place because other vets stopped doing in-home euthanasia, and I wanted to have that option," she says. "I worked in private practice before, and this is so much less stressful on the animal and the family. It's just easier all around."

LaMora gives families the option of cremation or personal burial. With a private cremation, the family receives a bag with the ashes, a candle, a clay paw print and other items. Service prices vary depending on the size of the animal and the distance traveled, but range from \$50 and up.

"It was not our first time with a pet, but it was our first time doing it in home," says Karen Davis, who had LaMora make a visit to her home in Petersburg for her 12-year-old dog. "I love that I have the ability for Dr. LaMora to come to my home. I like the fact that I didn't have to stress our dog out by taking her to the vet."

Capital District Mobile Veterinary Services, which started in 2012, also provides in-home comfort to animals. Veterinarian Sarah Nolan and her assistant make an average of one euthanasia house call each day. They have also referred some patients to Blankfein during busy evening hours.

"We are appointment-based, but we try to accommodate with the owner if there is an emergency," Nolan says. "We also do a lot of hospice care leading up to the euthanasia. We communicate with the owner to decide whether the time is right or not."

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