



## PETS

# A FITTING FAREWELL

When time's up for a beloved pet, saying goodbye at home can be less traumatic for all, writes Roger Crosthwaite.

**P**addy didn't make it to Christmas. My sister's golden retriever, just shy of 17, had barely been able to make it around the block for his morning walk. His legs gave out and he was carried home to lie on his bed, where he gasped for breath. Paddy had outlived a diagnosis of cancer and a prediction of six months to live by more than three years. He'd had a grand life, but it was obvious that his time had come.

Paddy was taken to the local vet, where he was euthanased. Tears were shed, but it was the humane thing to do.

Looking at it logically, we will outlive nearly all the pets in our lives. Hopefully, like Paddy, they'll live to a ripe old age, and depart with comfort and dignity.

In Australia, euthanasia is commonly done in a vet's surgery but, even with the most conscientious care, that can be distressing to both animal and owners. Having a pet euthanased at home, in familiar surroundings, can mean a more comfortable passing for the animal and less emotional stress for its owner.

To that end, Melbourne veterinarian Dr Emma Whiston started a home euthanasia service, My Best Friend. The child of an English country vet, she had seen her father humanely put down many beloved animals at home, and believes this is kinder than the experience of euthanasia in a clinic.

"There's the car trip there, the time in a waiting room, the unfamiliar smells

and the noises, so it can be scary for the animal," says Dr Whiston.

"Our animals are living longer, and we somehow expect they can always be fixed. Having them put down is... well, there's a lot of guilt, a feeling of disloyalty. But when the time comes, let us provide them with a good death, with a decision made of love and courage."

With My Best Friend, there is the opportunity for all family members to gather round and give their pet a last pat and a hug. The animal is given a sedative first, to induce a calm sleep, before the euthanasia solution is given.

Depending on the combination of drugs used and the size of the animal, the service costs between \$250 and \$450. Dr Whiston can be contacted at [mybestfriendonline.com.au](http://mybestfriendonline.com.au). Many other vets around Australia will also perform at-home euthanasia. **H&G**

### *Time to let go*

Euthanasia is the act of inducing humane death with the minimum of pain, fear or distress to the animal involved. The Australian Veterinary Association considers that an attending veterinarian must recommend euthanasia for an animal if the animal is suffering and that suffering cannot be adequately minimised or managed.



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