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From: ExtMAGDRL@yahoogroups.com on behalf of lissa [lissa@lissa.net]
Sent: Friday, June 24, 2005 4:31 PM
To: ExtMAGDRL@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [ExtMAGDRL] DOE Topic #20: Death at home

Hi All,

The death of a beloved Great Dane family member is sad, but inevitable. It's tough enough to deal with, but if it occurs at a vet's office or animal care facility you will be offered options for final arrangements. However, some of us would prefer to have our Dane to pass in its familiar surroundings at home. And with a Dane's predisposition to bloat, we all know that death may occur at home at any time. Therefore as a follow-on to last week's discussion of Euthanasia, this is another sad, yet worthwhile subject presented to all as Dog Owner Education Topic #20: Death at home.

Beyond the shock and grief of loss, if your Dane dies in your home, practical matters must be addressed. Have you thought about how you would handle the remains of your pet should this happen? I sure hadn't until a fellow MAGDRL member shared her experience with her Dane's death at home.

Our member chose a gentle at-home euthanasia which was performed by her vet. The procedure itself was appropriate, but what came after was a nightmare. Our member arranged for final pickup by a licensed crematorium. The crematorium sent out a girl who had back problems, who arrived 3 hours late, and who drove a Honda Element. The rear seats didn't fold down, so the girl said, "Well, if he is too big to get into the Element, we can leave him in the yard for the night" -- a horrific response! The owners chose instead to gently lift the body of their beloved Dane into the Element's small rear compartment -- I can't even imagine how undignified that was. Beyond that, the girl did not bring a contract -- but did collect a payment of \$400; the crematorium promised return of the remains within 1 week, but it took 4 weeks plus many phone calls; and the pre-cremation custom paw-print that our member paid extra for turned out to be a disgusting lump of clay. This crematorium's actions added unnecessary trauma to this grieving Dane owner.

It's smart to consider final arrangements for your beloved pet in advance of the need, but what are the options? Common options are discussed here: <http://www.ourpals.com/support/care.htm> As noted, in some areas pet burial at home is prohibited. Some Animal Controls, SPCAs and shelters may provide pick-up and disposal services. Many of us would prefer cremation and return of the ashes. Whichever option you choose, death of a pet is traumatic, but pre-planning will help you to be sure you did the right thing for your special companion.

If you choose the option of cremation, our member suggests doing the following to avoid a nightmare experience:

"You should have a written contract with the crematorium with EVERY single detail YOU want on there - so if something is NOT right - you have the contract to fall back on. Although a business may be licensed, that doesn't mean they are GOOD at what they do. If people ask me, I tell them it is VERY important to consult your vet about a crematorium - they deal with them often and know the good from the bad."

She goes on to say, "Our next contract will read:

- 1) A van will be sent to pick up said dog
- 4) ____ number of people will be available to pick up said dog at said

address.

- 2) The dog will be picked up between the hours of _____ and _____
- 3) After cremation, dog's remains will be returned to owner within _____ days."

There is information about final options here: The Final Farewell: How to Handle a Pet's Remains <http://www.pet-loss.net/funeral.html> which covers home burial, cemetery burial, or cremation. There are also other good links on this site.

Please remember that the recommended approach is to get a referral from your vet. However if that is not possible, you can find resources for pet crematories and cemeteries by state here: http://www.paws-to-heaven.com/Support_directory.htm Be sure to interview anyone you're considering just as you would for a human family member, and get ALL your requirements written into your contract!

As always, thanks for educating yourselves to benefit dogs and their owners!

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"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself." - Josh Billings