

An Aid to Burying a Pet

*Please accept our most heartfelt sympathies for your loss.
Our thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time.*

Important Considerations

- Burial of animal bodies is not permitted in urban and suburban areas.
- Burial should only be performed in accordance with local and state laws and with the landlord's authorization.
- There are no official guidelines for pet burial. To protect human, animal, and environmental health, please follow these recommendations.

Before Burial

After your beloved pet has passed, you may notice certain physical changes. These can be surprising or distressing if you aren't expecting them, but they are normal biological processes that occur as the body transitions after death. Understanding what may happen can bring comfort and help you prepare.

Movements and Reflexes:

After death, a pet's muscles may still twitch or contract for several minutes to even a couple of hours. These are involuntary reflexes caused by residual nerve and muscle activity as the body uses its remaining oxygen and energy stores. Sometimes, small jerks of the legs, tail, or mouth can occur. In rare cases, a pet might appear to take a shallow breath or move slightly — these are muscular reflexes, not signs of life.

Sounds and Air Release:

As muscles relax, especially around the chest and throat, air can be expelled from the lungs, sometimes producing soft sighs, whimpers, or other sounds. These are air movements through relaxed vocal cords and are a normal part of the body's natural settling.

Eyes Remaining Open:

It's very common for a pet's eyes to remain open after death. Closing the eyes requires active muscle control, and once life has ended, those muscles relax completely. You may gently close your pet's eyelids, but they may reopen — this is simply a natural occurrence, not a sign of discomfort.

Bodily Fluids:

Some body fluids may leak from the nose, mouth, or rectum as internal muscles relax. You can place your pet on an absorbent towel or pad to help with cleanup.

Rigor Mortis (Stiffening):

The body will begin to stiffen within 2–4 hours as rigor mortis sets in and will gradually relax again after about 24–48 hours. This is a normal chemical process in the muscles. As the body moves in and out of rigor mortis, it may appear to be moving.

If you find these changes upsetting, gently wrap your pet in a soft blanket or towel and keep them in a cool, quiet place until burial or cremation can be arranged.



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Guidelines for Burial

1. Location & Depth:

When digging a hole, ensure that the top of the body will be covered with at least **2 feet** of earth. If this depth is not attainable, cover the site with a large rock or wire mesh to prevent disturbance by wildlife.

Note that:

- Euthanized pet remains can be toxic to wildlife if ingested.
- Pets that died of a contagious disease should be cremated, not buried.
- Avoid burial in sandy, rocky, or flood-prone soil or near home foundations.
- Burials must be at least **200 feet** from surface water (streams, rivers, lakes) and **500 feet** from drinking water wells.

2. Lime Application:

Place a layer of garden lime (not quicklime) at the bottom of the hole and another over the body. This helps with odor control and decomposition.

3. Covering the Grave:

Fill and compress the earth, level the soil, and consider marking the grave with a stone, plant, or memorial item.

4. Disclosure:

If you sell or transfer ownership of your property, please inform future owners about any buried pets.

Take a Moment

This is a tender time — allow yourself space to grieve and remember the love you shared. You have given your companion peace and dignity — a final act of devotion and care.



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