

August 2, 2006

Dear Doctor of Veterinary Medicine:

The mission of the Pet Hospice program is to provide end-of-life home care for pets as well as emotional and educational support for their owners. The philosophy behind Pet Hospice is based on the principle that death is part of life and the process of terminal illness can be experienced with dignity and relative comfort within the home. Hospice looks to give pets a safe, caring, and intimate end-of-life experience in their familiar home environment, as well as giving owners the support they need.

Pet Hospice was founded and is run by professional veterinary students from Colorado State University, with the support of two C.S.U. V.M.C. advisors; an Argus Institute grief counselor and an Oncology DVM. The students are trained to assess pain as well as ways to help owners process a terminal diagnosis and determine when the time is right if they elect to euthanize. The grief counselors and our faculty advisor are available as resources to help with further medical understanding and for clients that may require additional support.

The primary function of our case managers is to be a communications liaison between you and your client. We follow your instructions in advising clients and preparing them for the loss of their pet.

We can help to provide an objective assessment of the pet's condition as well as help address client concerns that are then relayed to you. We explain disease processes, assess pain and overall wellness, and provide body care option explanations and grief counseling. Our managers do not give diagnoses, change medication dosages, provide critical care, or perform euthanasia. We do give in-home care, such as administering fluids, changing bandages, or help to give medications.

A typical hospice client has a pet that has been given a terminal diagnosis and is believed to have less than three months to live. They live within 30 minutes or 20 miles of Fort Collins and are willing to have two of our volunteers visit them at their home to talk about, and visit with, their pet. This team would visit them at their home anywhere between every two weeks and twice a day depending on the case, your instructions, and the owner's and pet's needs. You would be provided with a written report detailing our interactions with the client and an assessment of the pet within 24 hours of the visit. Any medical decisions or euthanasia would still be up to your discretion.

This program provides a unique opportunity to the veterinary students involved in the program, your clients, and your practice. Since this service is free to you and your clients, you are able to provide a heightened degree of care for your patients, while also getting better information about the concerns of your client and condition of their pet. It also provides a unique opportunity to CSU veterinary students by allowing them to gain more direct experience with client communication, pain assessment, and end-of-life counseling.

If you are interested in providing Pet Hospice care for your clients or have addition questions, please call our team managers at (970) 219-7335. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your time.

Pet Hospice Team Managers  
Kelly Carlsten  
Katie McDermott

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