# What to Look for in a Pet Cremation Service

To get the cremation service that you want



We look at pet cremation services from the point of view of you, the pet owner, and explain what to look out for when choosing a cremation for your pet.

# **Chestnut Lodge Pet Crematorium and Pet Cemetery**

## What to Look for in a Pet Cremation Service

## What do you expect from a pet cremation service?

Everyone has their own ideas about a cremation, mostly based on the cremation of people. However, other alternatives exist for pets and it is important that you have a clear picture of what you expect before you look at how well or badly a pet cremation service should be rated.

Most of you would expect an individual or private cremation to be carried out the same way as a human cremation. You either want the ashes back or to have them scattered in a memorial ground or natural dispersion site.

If that service is not required then most people would like to think their pet is handled decently and if they are going to a pet crematorium then the ashes will be scattered or buried somewhere nice.

Although most do not like to think too closely about the process, the fact that pet cremation is only regulated on a very simple disposal basis means that you should be on your guard if you want to ensure your pet receives the service you expect and that may be costing a substantial sum.

Veterinary surgeries have little understanding of the process and may be influenced by other factors in choosing pet cremation service. This means it is down to you, the pet owner to verify you are getting a true cremation service for their pet.

The following information has been assembled to enable you to do just that. We have looked at the cremation services from the pet owner's point of view and have set conditions designed to ensure a minimum standard. You may want other conditions and you are free to request these from a crematorium. Most genuine pet crematoriums are happy to vary their services to suit individual pet owners. However, there has to be a minimum standard and we hope this document will cover that.

We have included details of how we at Chestnut Lodge meet or exceed these standards. We hope you agree with us. If you wish to discuss any matters in more detail then feel free to contact us. The service we and all other pet crematoriums provide is for you, the pet owner, so it is important that we satisfy your needs above anything else.

Telephone 01342 712976

Or email ccdp@clpets.co.uk

You can also leave comments on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/petcrematorium

or access our page from the website at

www.clpets.co.uk



# **Choosing the Cremation Service for Your Pet**

Remember that the service your veterinary surgery uses may not fit your requirements for your pet so it is important that you receive a full explanation. It is also an essential part of your rights under the Consumer Protection Regulations. If you do not receive this from your vet or the crematorium then our advice is to look elsewhere. Do not get rushed into things or make a decision when you are in a distressed state.

#### **Essential Points to Consider**

You should receive information detailing the services on offer with a clear description of how these services will be carried out. These should cover

How your pet is transported, handled and identified

How your pet will be kept awaiting cremation

How the cremation procedures are carried out

How they ensure all the ashes are recovered

How the ashes are prepared and how they ensure no ashes are lost

How you will receive your ashes

- You should be given a price for the complete service.
- You should be told the timescale for collection, cremation and return of ashes if required.

## How do we meet this at Chestnut Lodge?

- ✓ We provide a detailed description of our services both in our brochure and on our website. We also have extensive information on our website about the pet cremation sector and what you might expect.
- ✓ All our fees are detailed in our brochure and on our website. Our brochures are given to all veterinary surgeries that provide our services and you should receive one of these when you request a cremation service. You may always telephone us to make any enquiries.
- ✓ All clients who deal with us directly are told when their ashes will be ready and given an indication of when the cremation will be carried out. We are happy to telephone people if they wish to be told when we are about to start the cremation. Most cremations are carried out the same day or the following morning and ashes are normally ready to collect the day after you bring your pet or we collect.
- ✓ If you arrange a cremation through one of our participating veterinary surgeries and take advantage of our reduced fees for a twice weekly collection and delivery service then you will normally have a maximum of one week after death for the ashes to be returned to the surgery.



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## How are Pets Collected, Transported and Identified?

#### **Essential Points to Consider**

- Your pet should be handled with care and respect at all times.
- ➤ It is a regulatory requirement that pets must be carefully placed into leakproof containers. These may be anything from a lined coffin to a body bag. You should be made aware of how this is to carried out.
- An explanation should be given as to how the container will be transported. Containers may be stacked where multiple collections are made or they may be placed on the floor of a vehicle or a shelf within it.
- ➤ Bodies should always be secured so they do not move around and bodies should not be piled one on top of the other.
- ➤ BEWARE : Many pet crematoriums will transport many pets piled together in bags, often mixed with other waste bags collected from veterinary surgeries.
- ➤ All bodies must carry a clear identification label.

## How do we meet this Chestnut Lodge?

- ✓ All of our staff are trained to treat the pets as if they were their own, with the care and respect due to them. It can be summed up in the first of our four Golden Rules Always imagine the owner of the pet is standing behind you and watching your every action. That way you will always carry out the service with care and dignity.
- ✓ We have several different ways to contain pets for transportation. We use a combination of lined plastic containers or our own respectful white bags placed into the plastic containers.
- ✓ If we collect from someone's house we normally place the pet onto white cremation film and lift it gently into a solid plastic container. This may then be closed for transport. A label or printed sheet is placed with the pet to ensure identification is easily made on arrival at the crematorium.
- ✓ We provide veterinary surgeries that use our services with our white bags into which your pet may be carefully placed. We also supply labels for each service: those for individual cremation will have all your details together with your pet's details and how you would like the ashes returned or scattered; those for communal cremations identify the veterinary surgery and have a space for the practice to write your pet's details. These are kept on our database.



- ✓ Pets are carefully placed into containers side by side if more than one will easily fit. Bodies are not placed one on top of the other. The containers lock together so that they will not move around in the vehicle.
- ✓ We have several different vehicles. The cars would normally be used for collections from home or for individual collections from veterinary surgeries. For our twice weekly runs around the vets we use a large van. This is so the containers may be laid out neatly within the vehicle and we can easily get into the storage area to adjust the containers as necessary. Our collection service should not be confused with other so-called pet crematoriums that pile bodies into the back of vans as if they were waste sacks. Our storage compartment is fitted out with the containers and the inside will always look the same no matter how many pets we transport. All pets are placed into the vehicle and carried with care and respect.
- ✓ Details of our containment systems for transportation are included on our website and in our brochure.



# How are Pets Kept at the Crematorium

#### **Essential Points to Consuder**

- ➤ If your pets are not to be cremated within a short time of arrival then how are they kept respectfully.
- This may be on shelves in a cool or cold room, placed on a table or trolley in a reception area or held in deep freeze. They must be kept in clean and hygienic conditions.
- ➤ However they are kept they should not be placed one on top of the other without some solid separation.
- ➤ Beware: many places will either pile bodies into a freezer or into wheelie bins to await cremation. This type of handling has no part in a cremation procedure.

## How do we meet this at Chestnut Lodge?

- ✓ Most pets arriving at Chestnut Lodge are cremated the same or the following day.

  Communal cremations may wait an extra day if we do not have sufficient pets to make up a communal cremation.
- ✓ We have separate rooms for placing individual and communal cremations.
- ✓ If you deliver your pet to us we have a reception area where you may spend some time with your pet. Often your pet will be taken from the reception directly for cremation.
- ✓ Otherwise individual cremations are placed in their own room which has metal shelving where each individual pet is placed, still carrying their identification label. Very large animals may be left within their containers.
- ✓ Communal cremations are placed onto metal shelving within a separate room or sometimes kept within their container if they are too large to place on the shelves.
- ✓ Both rooms are kept cool for storage but we also have freezers for those pets that need to be rapidly cooled either due to the condition of the body or because they have to be kept for a longer period of time. This only applies to a small number of animals and they are placed carefully into the units.
- ✓ Pets for burial have to be placed in deep freeze in preparation for the funeral. They are carefully laid out within the correct sized container so they may easily be transferred to the coffin on the day of the burial.

## **The Cremation Process**

#### **Essential Points to Consider**

- ➤ Your pet should be carefully placed into the cremation chamber.
- ➤ Individual cremation your pet should be the only one in the chamber.
- ➤ Communal cremation your pet should be placed on the hearth with others. Pets should not be placed on top of each other although it has to be accepted that pets may be placed on previously cremated remains.
- ➤ Identification labels or discs should stay with the pet and be attached to the cremation chamber at all times whenever the remains have to be clearly identified

## How do we meet this at Chestnut Lodge?

- ✓ All pets are handled carefully and placed onto the hearth. We use a hydraulic table for larger dogs so they may easily slide in through the door. Communal cremations are placed around the hearth. This is only large enough for one giant dog, two large dogs or five or six cats at a time. As the cremations progress then more communal cremations are added when safe to do so. These are placed or slid onto the hearth never thrown or piled on top of each other.
- ✓ For Individual cremations the identification label is placed on the side of the cremator. An entry is made in the diary recording the time of the cremation, the name of the pet and the owner, the weight of the pet and a description. Our second Golden Rule is Always make sure the identification label stays with the pet, is attached to the machine when cremating and stays with the ashes. Never separate the label from the pet.
- ✓ Communal cremation labels are collected at the cremation time and kept so the details may be recorded on the computer.



# **Recovering Your Pet's Ashes**

#### **Essential Points to Consider**

- ➤ The hearth must always be cleared of all visible remains before another cremation takes place. How is this done?
- ➤ The exception will be communal cremations where the ashes are collected on completion.

## How do we meet this at Chestnut Lodge

- ✓ After each individual cremation the unit needs to sit for a little while to bring the temperature down. All remains are then raked forward and into a steel tray. The hearth is then swept using a brush dipped in water to withstand the heat of the brickwork. A light tap ensures there are no remains left sticking to the brush. This raking and brushing method is best practice in the top human crematoriums. The hearth is finished off by a hand brush dipped in water. It is then carefully checked by shining a light over it to ensure all visible remains have been collected. Any remains that fall from the tray while brushing are carefully collected.
- ✓ Communal cremations are usually left overnight to cool as there is a great deal of heat stored in both the cremator and the cremated remains. These are then collected as above and transferred to the cemetery where they are placed into the memorial grave.
- ✓ Are there any residual remains left in the cremator? No, all visible remains are removed. You can be sure that the ashes will be those of your, and only your, pet.



## **Preparing Your Pet's Ashes**

#### **Essential Points To Check**

- ➤ In order to produce a fine ash suitable for scattering, the remains have to be processed through a machine suitable for the purpose. This is normally referred to as a cremulator.
- > Care must be taken at all times to avoid losing ash, and machinery must be carefully brushed afterwards to collect all the remains.
- ➤ BEWARE : Many cremulators, especially older ones, leave quite substantial amounts of ash within the machinery. make sure your crematorium knows how to deal with this.

## How do we meet this at Chestnut Lodge?

- ✓ We use a machine comprising two vertical discs, the principle being similar to an old-fashioned flour mill. This acts as our cremulator. The remains are fed through a chute in the top of the machine and ground into a fine ash between the discs. They then pass out through the base and into a collection bag. The ashes may have to be put through more than once to ensure a fine, powdered consistency to the finished ash.
- ✓ The remains are examined closely while being fed through to remove any metallic pieces or bits of the brickwork that have been swept out with the ashes.
- ✓ The important part is the cleaning of the machinery and trays afterwards. Firstly, we brush any trays that contain the remains to ensure everything passes through the cremulator. Once we are satisfied with the standard of the ashes, the fronts of the discs and feed chute are brushed of all ash and this is collected. One disc is fixed which is easily cleaned. The other is removed, brushed clean and then the inside of the cremulator is brushed out to ensure all ash passes down to the collection bag. Only when we are completely satisfied is the disc replaced, the door closed and the collection bag removed, again checking there are no residuals left around the edge of the bag. We are therefore confident all your pet's remains are returned to you and there is no contamination between different sets of ashes.
- ✓ Our third Golden Rule sums this up Always make sure the cremation chamber and ashes processors are cleaned thoroughly to collect all the remains before the next cremation or ashes preparation begins. There must be no mixing of remains.

# **Scattering or Burial of Your Pet's Ashes**

## **Essential Points to Check**

- ➤ If you are leaving your ashes for the crematorium to handle, are they guaranteed to go to a memorial area or site set aside for that purpose?
- Are the remains being sent to a normal waste site this is the normal route for many of the pets that have been sent for a so-called communal cremation
- You should receive notification or a certificate detailing how your pet was cremated and where the ashes are. This should apply to both communal and individual cremations.

## How do we meet this at Chestnut Lodge?

- ✓ If you do not have your ashes returned to you then individual cremations are scattered over the grounds of the pet cemetery.
- ✓ All communal cremation ashes go into a communal grave in the pet cemetery. This is used until full and then covered over and planted as a shrub or flower bed. The current area is fenced in for safety and has a memorial bed next to it where you may have a plaque placed.
- ✓ The pet cemetery has to be licensed under the same regime as a waste site but only animal remains are permitted. It is only used as a cemetery.
- ✓ All ashes are either returned to pet owners or are placed into the pet cemetery. We do not carry out any disposal work where ashes go off to a municipal or private waste site.
- ✓ Every person who has an individual cremation receives a certificate which states the system used for cremation. We have a similar certificate for communal cremations although we are having some difficulty persuading veterinary surgeries to pass the information to us so we can send these notifications to all pet owners. Many vets (and it is an opinion that is encouraged by many pet crematoriums) still seem to think that people do not care about their pets if they don't have an individual cremation. That is why so many do not worry about the service and happily go on telling people their pet will go off to be cremated with others when in reality they are receiving a basic incineration service. We believe all pet owners should have the choice and be given the facts so they can decide how they want their pet handled. We respect our clients and always provide the service they want and are contracting us to carry out.
- ✓ Pet owners may contact us directly or request a certificate from their vets if they have received a communal cremation service but not had a notification that the service has been carried out.



# **Receiving the Ashes of Your Pet**

#### **Essential Points to Check**

- ➤ Have the ashes been packed in a container you have chosen?
- ➤ Do you have a certificate or notification explaining the cremation method and assurance on the points covered in this report?

## How do we meet this at Chestnut Lodge?

- ✓ We have a variety of options for the return of ashes, all displayed and priced on our website and in our brochure.
- ✓ Sometimes the wrong options request is passed to us from the veterinary surgery or you may have a change of mind. Just contact us and we will be happy to change the option.
- ✓ You will find further details of our return options packed with your ashes. These explain how to open the various caskets should you wish to do so. Again, we will always change an option for you.
- ✓ As explained in the previous section all ashes will be accompanied by a certificate detailing the cremation method and certifying the authenticity of the ashes and the whole cremation process.
- ✓ We take great care in the packing of the ashes to ensure we maintain our consistent high standard. Our fourth Golden Rule sums it up Always work as if it is your first cremation and pay the same attention as you did then. There are no second chances it has to be right first time.

## Do we meet your expectations?

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We hope this has given you an insight into what goes on in pet cremation and enables you to compare services and see behind the glossy images and smooth talking. It all comes down to one thing – are the correct procedures being followed and are you getting the service you expect? We hope we have shown that Chestnut Lodge rates as highly as anyone could and that you can have confidence that we will carry out your wishes to the letter.

Perhaps the simplest way to rate a crematorium is to see if it follows our four Golden Rules. These are given in full on the final page. If anyone follows those they will not go far wrong. Sadly, we have to say that is rare and until we can get some proper legislation to control the way pet crematoriums work then pet owners must take care to check and rate the service they are being offered.



## OUR FOUR GOLDEN RULES FOR PET CREMATION

These are the rules by which all our staff work.

- ✓ Always imagine the owner of the pet is standing behind you and watching your every action. That way you will always carry out the service with care and dignity.
- ✓ Always make sure the identification label stays with the pet, is attached to the machine when cremating and stays with the ashes. Never separate the label from the pet.
- ✓ Always make sure the cremation chamber and ashes processors are cleaned thoroughly to collect all the remains before the next cremation or ashes preparation begins. There must be no mixing of remains.
- ✓ Always work as if it is your first cremation and pay the same attention as you did then. There are no second chances – it has to be right first time.

We are always here to carry out your wishes.

The Staff

Chestnut Lodge Pet Crematorium and Pet Cemetery

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