

# My Animal Hospice Experience

My husband Chris and I adopted Sallie Lou, our adorable Schnauzer, when she was 10 years old. She had many health issues throughout her life. At age 13 we learned that she had a slow growing benign tumor on her brain stem. After this diagnosis, a mobile hospice veterinarian visited Sallie at home for more than a year, treating her with acupuncture to help with orthopedic and neurological issues. Sallie was also prescribed medication to control some of her pain.

Eventually, we met with our mobile hospice veterinarian to make a plan for saying goodbye. We struggled greatly to make the decision for euthanasia as it broke our hearts to have to let her go. We knew however that her quality of life had declined so much that ending her suffering was the most important thing for us to do.

On Sallie's final day, July 25, 2013, our mobile hospice veterinarian was incredibly compassionate and caring. We said a peaceful and beautiful prayer together after Sallie's passing. Caring for our little Sallie in our home, with the assistance of our mobile hospice veterinarian, was absolutely the right option for all of us. I could not have asked for a more beautiful experience.

*- Kathryn Jennings*



# Finding an Animal Hospice Provider

To find a pet hospice provider and a list of pet loss counselors, visit [www.iaahpc.org](http://www.iaahpc.org). Online webinars for pet parents are also available.



## Animal Hospice & Palliative Care:

**End-of-Life Care for Pets  
Support for Pet Parents**

[www.iaahpc.org](http://www.iaahpc.org)

When treatment no longer offers a cure, animal hospice and palliative care provides more options for pet care and comfort.

*The IAAHPC is dedicated to promoting knowledge of, and developing guidelines for, comfort-oriented care to companion animals as they approach the end of life.*

**For More Information:**  
[www.iaahpc.org](http://www.iaahpc.org)  
[membership@iaahpc.org](mailto:membership@iaahpc.org)

International Association  
of Animal Hospice and  
Palliative Care

IAAHPC





# What is Hospice?

# Hospice for my Pet?

# Benefits of Hospice

## What is animal hospice?

Animal hospice is care focused on meeting the needs of pets and their families during the final stages of incurable disease. A caring “Hospice Team” of veterinary professionals and support service providers offers assistance in providing quality of life for the patient that includes palliation of pain and preparation for death [with or without intervention]. The Hospice Team guides pet parents in making decisions about where and when to say good-bye and making final arrangements for burial or cremation. The Hospice Team also validates and supports the emotional needs of caregivers and other family members. Animal hospice offers an alternative to premature euthanasia, but euthanasia is always considered an option within hospice care.

## Why animal hospice and palliative care for my beloved pet?

In the practice of human hospice, families are supported and empowered to provide end-of-life care to their loved ones. Many pet parents want to follow this same practice for their beloved pet. Animal hospice allows families to make a plan for their pet’s end-of-life journey that begins with their personal values, goals, and beliefs. By having this information, pet parents will have a greater peace-of-mind in knowing that everything was done to decrease the pain and suffering for their beloved animal friend in their final days.



For 40 years, human hospice has supported families through their care-giving journey and in healing after loss. The hospice model has increasingly been applied to caring for pets in the United States and around the world.

## I am overwhelmed with the decisions and the information confronting me.

Veterinary professionals provide pet parents with education about a pet’s disease and prognosis indicators that can be used to regularly reassess quality of life for themselves and their pet. Increased suffering and pain will signal the appropriate time to enact the family’s own, unique end-of-life plan, with assistance from their Veterinary Hospice Team. Despite the emotional difficulty of this time, pet caregivers find that they can continue to make good decisions on behalf of their pet.

## I am unsure of my responsibilities when providing hospice for my beloved pet.

Preparing to care for an aging, chronic or terminally ill pet will come with its own unique set of challenges. Pet parents take time to learn about their pet’s condition and find ways to ensure the highest degree of comfort possible, monitor their pet’s quality of life, and regularly communicate with their Veterinary Hospice team.

## How do I know if hospice care is the right choice for my pet?

Many pet parents choose hospice care in order to have the time to say good-bye to their companions, to plan for their death, and to ensure that they have an active role in all the decisions regarding their pet’s needs. For those who have the desire and need for comfort care in the last days, weeks, and months of life, hospice care may be the right choice.

## What kind of diseases or conditions would benefit from hospice and palliative care?

In animal hospice, any life-limiting or incurable disease that is contributing to an family’s increased level of caregiving for their pet may warrant hospice and/or palliative care.

These include:

- Cancer
- Organ failure [common examples: kidney, liver and heart]
- Osteoarthritis
- Cognitive dysfunction syndrome or dementia
- Senior pets approaching the end of life
- Failure to thrive

## Testimonial

“Now that I know hospice is an end-of-life option for my beloved four legged children, I believe it was the best choice I could have made for my kitty. I felt a strong sense of comfort I wasn’t expecting. I feel so lucky to have had the chance to give back to my boy as he had given me all the energy he had so selflessly all of his life. Our bond grew deeper than I ever thought possible, and the support I received from my hospice veterinarian has helped heal my heart and find peace.”

~ Angie Thomas