Budgerigar Health And Related

Euthanasia : The Difficult Decision

Although no-one wants to be faced with this situation, as bird/animal owners, chances are that one day, you WILL be faced with dealing with this.

The word euthanasia comes from Greek terms. ‘’eu’’ meaning ‘good’, and ‘’thanatos’’ meaning ‘death’. This is my view on what is a ‘good death’. The death should be as humane, as painless, and as trauma free as possible. The animal should experience little, or any if possible, anxiety pre-death. Loss of conciousness should be quick, and as pain free as possible. Usually, a well handled euthanasia is totally pain free.

Here is how the proceedings went with my recent encounter with euthanasia with my cockatiel, Chip.

1) Extensive tests were run to evaluate the seriousness of his condition (it was already clear at this point that his condition was quite serious.)

2) I asked my vet to be totally honest with regarding the outcome of the tests, if Chips condition was to prove incurable, and his life quality was going to be poor and degenerative, to advise me if euthanasia was advisable. I knew deep down that I would probably recognise this situation myself, but allowing for emotion to blind me slightly over my pets welfare, I needed to be sure I would not let my pet down.

3) Agreeing/coming to terms with such a decision should it arise, is not easy. However, it is vital at this point that you put your pets welfare before your own emotional needs.

HERE IS HOW TAKING MY BELOVED PET BIRD ON HIS FINAL JOURNEY WAS HANDLED: None of it was easy, it was extremely difficult and painful emotionally, to the point of being physically painful. BUT deep within my heart, I knew I was doing right by my pet. (this is simply the decision to let a beloved friend go, not the actual act of euthanasia that I speak of above)

1) I prepared his travel cage and made it as comfortable as I could, as I did with any trip to the vet..

2) I kept my own emotions under strict control, and quietly and calmly removed him from his cage and placed him in his travel cage.

3) I was not kept waiting at the vets. They knew the reason I was there, and I was called in to the consulting room within minutes.

4) My vet quickly went over Chips condition, his prognosis, and reassured me that I was doing the right thing. I was asked if I wanted to be present during proceedings, which I did. There was NO pressure whatsoever put on me over this,

5) Chip was first of all given a whiff of general anaesthetic, and he very quickly and painlessly fell asleep, deeply asleep. It was calm, struggle free, and humane. Once he was fully anaesthetised, he was injected directly into his liver, via his stomach. This is the injection that actually causes the death of the animal.

6) All through the procedure, the vet chatted gently and calmly to me, explaining step by step what was happening. This kept me calm, which in turn will have reflected on my pets final emotions before he fell asleep under the anaesthesia.

7) I was then left in total peace and quiet (although the vet did not leave the room, he simply stayed silent) while I held my bird in my hands close to my heart as the final steps of his beautifully peaceful journey were completed.

8) After about a minute and a half, the vet gently suggested that he was going to check for breathing and heartbeat. Chip was not removed from my hands, and the vet was gentle and calm as he very carefully checked Chip for any signs of life. He acknowledged gently that Chip was now at peace.

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9) A little bit of panic started to grow inside of me at this point, I needed to be sure that his euthanasia WAS successful. My vet patiently gave me another minute nursing Chip, and then quietly and calmly checked for signs of life again. He reassured me that Chips journey was, indeed, over. Chips passing was extremely calm, painless, and peaceful.

I am sharing and reliving these moments for those of you who think I could never cope. It will be traumatic and disturbing and horrible. My pet will suffer.
For those of you who may be facing this now, or may at sometime during the future face this difficult decision, I hope my experience has helped, or will help you feel more prepared should the time arise,

The personal loss and grief can still be extreme, but I do have to say that the beautiful peacefulness of your pets passing becomes a great comfort.
If your vet does not use anaesthesia as a prelude to euthanasia as a matter of course, you CAN insist upon it. This way, things are much easier on both your pet, and on you, especially with a small animal.

Euthanasia is seen as a dark subject, and from my experience, rarely discussed openly in public forums. It is even quite difficult to find heartfelt personal experiences on the web.

I hope my very recent experience of it has helped remove some of the darkness and horror that often seems to surround this subject. I hope it shows that those final steps in that final journey, can, indeed, have a peaceful beauty about them.
Even as I am writing this, I am grieving the loss of my much loved friend. But, I am NOT grieving how he passed. I will be eternally grateful for that beautiful, painfree, fear free passing.

AKA BBC Member Chirpy

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