

Owners have options for pets who've passed **By Brook Stockberger/Sun-News Business Editor** **Posted: 04/19/2010 12:00:00 AM MDT**

LAS CRUCES — On Wednesday, Christopher Micklevitz got his friend back.

The 36-year-old man knew the end was near for his 14-year-old golden retriever, Hannah, but the decision to let her go was very difficult.

"She followed me around the best she could, but her back paws were swelling and I had to help her," Micklevitz said. "I take all my pets to Jornada Veterinary Clinic and they'd done a good job keeping her alive, but her body was starting to give out."

The Las Cruces man visited Beloved Pets and operator Darlene Berg at 403 S. Melendres St. and made arrangements to have Hannah cremated. After she was put to sleep at the vet's office on April 8, Micklevitz drove her to Beloved Pets.

"(Berg) offered to carry her, but I didn't want to leave her," he said. "I carried her in a body bag and sat her on top of the freezer. They left me alone to do my grieving. I said goodbye. When I was ready, I zipped her back up."

Hannah's body was stored in the freezer until she could be sent to a crematorium in El Paso. Her ashes were returned to him nearly a week later in an urn with a photo of him and Hannah on the front.

Burial/disposal

When your pet dies, there are basically three options available: burial, cremation or disposal in a landfill.

If you live within the city limits, you are not allowed to bury a pet on your property. You can take it to the landfill yourself or let the city's animal control do so for you.

"For the disposal, there is a \$5 pick-up fee," said Rudy Adame, animal control supervisor. "There are some people who don't have the means of getting to a landfill."

In the county, you can bury your own animal, but you must do so within 24 hours and it has to be at least three feet underground and in a suitable location, according county's animal control ordinance.

The Doña Ana County Humane Society operates a pet cemetery on the East Mesa, near Wiesner Road off of Highway 70.

"We're in the process of rejuvenating it," said Jake Sims, president of the board at the humane society. "It's still operating; we had a burial there not too long ago."

Sims said there are plans to add a rock wall where animal ashes can be stored, along with a memorial wall. Next month, the group is going to work with Boy Scouts to clean up the place.

The fees for burial range from \$55 for cats to more, depending on the type and size of the animal. The cemetery even has a few horses. For more information, call the humane society at (575) 647-4808.

Cremation

If, like Micklevitz, you would like to have your pet cremated, there are a couple of options. Your veterinarian can usually dispose of your pet and have it cremated. Or you can take it yourself to a place like Beloved Pets or the new Forever Friends Pet Services, which is scheduled to open today.

Located at 1420 E. Bowman Ave., Forever Friends will be operated by Getz Funeral Home. The company has recently added two new crematoriums, one for humans and one for pets, so the bodies do not have to be sent out of town.

"Vets are willing for us to pick up from them or, if the family wants to bring the pet here, they have that option," said Lucille Getz, pet services consultant.

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

"We will be able to make home removals — that's 24/7 — and we can get the information and go to their home," said Christi Getz, pet funeral director.

Berg said that, at Beloved Pets, they usually do several cremations a month.

"We did five this week," she said on Thursday, "but that's an unusual week."

Both places report they will cremate a variety of animals and they both have a variety of urns for sale. Forever Friends will sell biodegradable coffins.

"We'll do dogs, cats, rats, snakes, iguanas," Christi Getz said. "We'll do a goldfish if they want; we'll do rabbits, turtles, birds."

Owner Terry Getz said there is a 700-pound weight limit.

Prices for cremation can range from about \$100 for smaller pets to \$1.75 per pound for larger animals, Christi Getz said.

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Burial/disposal

You are not allowed to bury an animal yourself in Las Cruces. You can take it to the landfill or let the city's animal control do so for you. In the county, you are allowed to bury animals. In addition, the Doña Ana County Humane Society operates a pet cemetery.

- Las Cruces Animal Control: (575) 528-4100
- Doña Ana Animal Control: (575) 525-8846
- Doña Ana County Humane Society (575) 647-4808

Cremation

Your veterinarian can usually dispose of your pet. Or you can take it yourself to a place that cremates animals. Here are some options:

- Forever Friends Pet Services: (575) 524-2v427
- Beloved Pets: (575) 526-2253