

# Pet Cremation: Here's What to Expect

**S**teve Woods recently told me about a woman who had her goldfish cremated.

The goldfish had been 20 years old. “She said ‘good morning’ to it every morning and ‘good night’ to it every evening,” he said.

It was important for her to do right by her silent companion in death. There’s no one right thing to do when a beloved pet has died, but cremation is an option – and an option many people don’t know much about even if they select it after a euthanasia at their veterinarian’s office.

With his wife Elaine, Steve runs [A Beloved Friends Pet Crematory](#) in Reno. He is also on the board of directors of the International Association of Pet Cemeteries and Crematories. We spoke about the biggest animal he’s ever cremated, how the different cremation options work, about exhuming buried pets if moving away, and the different ways to memorialize a beloved pet.



**By Mark Robison**

**Mark Robison:** What are some things to ask a pet crematorium before using their services to see if they are legitimate?

**Steve Woods:** There are 286 international pet cremation standards. Do they follow those standards?

**MR:** 286?

**SW:** Yes, 286. [The pet cremation business] is not something you just go for. There are reasons for each one. For example, do they weigh every pet when they come into the facility? That’s one of the standards. Cremations are done by weight so you need to weigh them on the way in so you know how to cremate them.

**MR:** How long does it take to cremate the typical pet?

**SW:** For any pet less than 50 pounds, it takes three hours. Anything 100 pounds or more, we’d set for a minimum of 4 hours.

**MR:** What’s the heaviest animal you ever cremated?

**SW:** The heaviest was 430 pounds – a bengal tiger.

**MR:** Besides cats and dogs (and goldfish), what other animals have you handled?

**SW:** Hamsters, guinea pigs, rats, snakes, rabbits, a lot of birds – cockatiels, parrots, canaries, parakeets. And goats, sheep, pigs.



**MR:** What are the different cremation options?

**SW:** “Private” means there’s only one pet in the crematory chamber, period. That’s not negotiable. “Partitioned” and “individual” are interchangeable words. A vet can make it seem like a pet is alone in the chamber, but “individual” does not mean that. For our company, we use fire brick between each animal [during a partitioned cremation]. Other companies use space for partitioned animals. There’s a higher chance of commingling ashes if space is used. “Communal” means together with other animals; with it, you cannot have the remains back.

**MR:** What are some of the different ways people can memorialize their pets?

**SW:** They can have clay paw prints. There are also ink paw prints – these can be used for a tattoo. You can have a picture urn with a photo of your pet on the front. We have glass pendant type urns made of blown glass and you put the ashes inside it.

**MR:** What do you see as the advantage of cremation over burying a pet in the backyard?

**SW:** You have to go down 4½ to 5 feet to bury a pet, especially in Nevada, because we have animal activity such as coyotes. And what if you sell the house? Around 2008, people were losing their homes and they were exhuming their pets and bringing them here to be cremated. I had people tell me, “I lost my job, my house – I’m not losing my dog.” So far, I think we’ve done 45 or 46 exhumation cases here.

**MR:** What do you hope people get out of the process?

**SW:** Everybody talks about closure. I want them (people using cremation for their pets) to feel better. They’ve raised this pet, taken care of this pet, a lot of them are rescue cases. They endeavored to give the pet a good life, a healthy life, a caring life, and they’re following through, even after they pass away. If you care about them that much, they’re basically a family member. So [with cremation] they feel they did all they could. And they feel a lot better for having done that.

Learn more about A Beloved Friends Pet Crematory at [abelovedfriendspetcrematory.com](http://abelovedfriendspetcrematory.com). They are located at 5325 Louie Lane #20 in Reno. Phone: 775-825-9900. Hours: Monday Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Sunday, holidays, and after hours by appointment only.

*Mark Robison is Senior Consultant at Humane Network. He was an award-winning senior editor at the Reno Gazette-Journal daily newspaper for many years, and he has been President of CockadoodleMoo Farm Animal Sanctuary since 2007.*

