Was My Pet Treated as Promised? APPCC Urges Owners to Ask Before Arranging Cremation

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Distressing social media images & subsequent investigation prompt calls for greater transparency over how pets are collected, stored, identified and cremated.

Pet owners and veterinary practices are being urged to ask tougher questions about what really happens after a pet is handed over for cremation.

The Association of Private Pet Cemeteries and Crematoria, APPCC, says recent distressing images shared widely on social media have caused understandable horror among pet owners. The APPCC will not comment on any individual business, person or unverified circumstances, but says the public reaction highlights a much bigger issue.

Herefordshire Council has confirmed that a multi-agency inquiry is under way. The council says it is working with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), the RSPCA and other relevant agencies as part of ongoing investigations and will take appropriate action within its powers and responsibilities.

Many families believe “individual cremation” means their pet will be handled personally, carefully and respectfully from beginning to end. In reality, unless they ask clear questions, they may not know how their pet is collected, transported, stored, identified, cremated, or how their ashes are recovered.

Kevin Spurgeon, a Director of the APPCC said:

> “The images being shared online have understandably shocked pet owners. But the bigger issue is that some practices which may still sit close to standard animal by-product handling could also horrify grieving families if they saw them for themselves.
>
> “A pet may be legally classed as an animal by-product after death, but to their family they are still a loved companion. Legal compliance is not always the same as meeting a family’s expectation of dignity, respect and care.” Government guidance treats deceased pets as Category 1 animal by-products. Rules around storage, transport, leak-proof containers, covered vehicles and disposal matter, but the APPCC says they do not answer the emotional question many families are really asking:

Government guidance treats deceased pets as Category 1 animal by-products. Rules around storage, transport, leak-proof containers, covered vehicles and disposal matter, but the APPCC says they do not answer the emotional question many families are really asking:

“Was my pet treated with the respect I was promised?”

Individual cremation is more than an urn at the end

The APPCC says pet owners should not judge a cremation service only by the casket, urn or ashes container returned afterwards.

Alexandra Shaw, APPCC Spokesperson said:

> *“Individual cremation is about the whole journey. It is about what happens after the pet leaves the family or veterinary practice. How are they* identified? Where do they go? Who is actually caring for them? Are they transported with others? Are they stored in bags, containers, refrigeration or freezers? Are they cremated completely alone?
>
> *“No family should find out too late that the reality did not match what they imagined.”*

What pet owners should do before choosing a service

The APPCC is urging pet owners to ask direct questions before agreeing to any cremation service:

Media:

Related Sectors:

Environment & Nature :: Farming & Animals :: Government :: Home & Garden :: Leisure & Hobbies :: Lifestyle & Relationships :: Opinion Article :: Public Sector & Legal ::

Related Keywords:

Cremation :: Individual Cremation :: Veterinary Cremation :: Cremation Fraud ::

Scan Me:

• Ask where your pet is going — get the name and full address of the crematorium.

• Ask who is really caring for your pet after they leave the vet — who owns the crematorium, who operates it, and who is legally responsible? Is it an independent crematorium, a large corporate provider, a vet-owned service, or a third-party contractor?

• Ask how your pet is identified — including tags, labels, paperwork, scans and records.

• Ask how your pet is collected and transported — including whether they travel with other pets and if so what that looks like in practice.

• Ask how your pet is stored before cremation — refrigeration, cool room, freezer, container or another system.

• Ask if your pet is cremated completely alone.

• Ask how ashes are recovered and checked.

• Ask whether you can visit or see behind the scenes.

• Ask for written information before you choose.

The APPCC also warns families not to rely only on websites, reviews, comforting language or awards. Reviews do not show what happens behind closed doors, and awards should be checked to understand whether they were independently judged, inspected or simply promotional.

A message to vets: have you seen it for yourself?

The APPCC is also calling on veterinary practices to review the cremation providers they recommend.

A vet's recommendation carries enormous trust. Many grieving families assume their practice has inspected the provider and knows exactly what happens after collection.

The APPCC says every veterinary practice should ask itself:

> ***"When did we last visit and inspect the crematorium we recommend to clients?"***

And:

> ***"Can we hand on heart explain exactly what happens to a pet once they leave our care?"***

Kevin Spurgeon said:

> *"Veterinary practices are often the gatekeepers. If a practice recommends a cremation provider, it should know how pets are collected,* identified, transported, stored, cremated and returned.
>
> *"A long-standing relationship, a price list or a sales visit is not the same as seeing behind the scenes."*

The APPCC says commercial arrangements should be transparent. Some veterinary practices may consider cost, convenience or margin when arranging cremation services. Those factors must never come before respect, honesty and the trust placed in them by grieving owners. Veterinary arrangement fees may mean a basic, low-cost 'ashes back' service becomes reassuringly expensive to vulnerable pet owners once marked up.

Why choose an APPCC member?

APPCC members work to a Code of Practice designed to protect pet owners and veterinary practices from the mis-selling of cremation services.

Accredited members undergo a detailed inspection where they have to demonstrate that they fulfil all their obligations under the Code of Practice, especially concerning the integrity of the cremation process. The APPCC use of the term **'cremation'** also encompasses careful and respectful handling of pets at all

times. For individual cremation, the APPCC Code requires that the pet is cremated alone and that the remains are scrupulously collected before any other cremation takes place.

Kevin Spurgeon added:

> *“APPCC membership is not just a badge. It means the pet crematorium has agreed to work to* recognised standards and be independently inspected.
>
> *“The simplest test is this: if the family who loved that pet saw the whole journey, would they feel the promise had been kept?”*

Pet owners and veterinary teams can find their nearest APPCC member at appcc.org.uk

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Association of Private Pet Cemeteries and Crematoria, APPCC, established in 1993, represents pet cemeteries and crematoria that have undergone a detailed inspection in addition to the basic APHA approval and promotes dignity, transparency and accountability in pet bereavement services.

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