



CANADIAN VETERINARY  
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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DES MÉDECINS VÉTÉRINAIRES

## What Veterinarians Should Ask When Selecting Pet Disposal Facilities

When choosing a pet disposal facility, it is important to ensure that the service provider is following best business practices. This will help protect your clients from further grief and protect your clinic from liability. Below are questions to ask the pet disposal facility to ensure the highest of standards.

- What kinds of records does the facility keep? How long are the records retained?
- What type of system does the facility use to identify the body bags in which animals are received?
- How will the facility handle multiple transfers from veterinary clinics to prevent loss of an individual body's identification tag?
- Are the bodies provided with toe tags or identification collars so that they can be identified even if they become displaced from the bags in which they are transported?
- Where and how are bodies stored after receipt by the facility and before disposal?
- Does the facility have refrigeration and freezer capacity to accommodate the volume? What method is used to identify patients' individual ashes and store and transport them after cremation?
- What is the daily capacity of the crematorium furnaces?
- What is the breakdown between the numbers of communal cremations versus individual cremations?
- How does the facility ensure that ashes of individually cremated pets are only those of the pet being cremated?
- What is the largest sized body that can be cremated in the facility's furnaces?
- Can the facility handle large breed dogs or small farm animals?
- If communal cremations are provided, how many animals are cremated at one time?
- Are owners or veterinarians permitted to observe the cremation?
- What is the standard turn-around time for receipt of a body from the veterinary practice to return of the ashes to the practice?
- What kind of packaging is used for the ashes and can owners open the containers and view the ashes?
- What type of fuel (fuel oil or natural gas) is used in the cremation?
- Do ashes contain chunks of bone or teeth or are they sifted to remove those fragments before they are returned to the owners?
- Has the facility been inspected by the province or municipality (as applicable), and if so, when was the last inspection?
- What numbers of animals are handled annually?
- Does the facility engage in any business other than pet disposal? For instance, does it burn medical waste, and, if so, are the ashes from that process mixed with the animal cremations?
- Do the furnaces meet the environmental regulations for the location? (or what governing body regulates pet crematoriums in your area).

*Source: The Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA) published an article (March 15, 2000) called What Veterinarians Should Know About Pet Cemeteries and Crematoriums and written by Melinda E. Hofmann, JD and James F. Wilson, DVM, JD.*