HOSPICE CARE FOR PETS PROVIDES NATURAL ALTERNATIVE TO EUTHANASIA

The typical perspective in today's society is to quickly put an end to what we perceive as our pet suffering and having lost quality of life. However, there are other ways to view nature's way of bringing closure to a lifetime in a body.

Consider the common suggestion of putting a horse down when it no longer eats. While a slowed appetite may have been observable for months or years before the actual dying process starts, in the last days of physical life it is normal for the dying to stop eating entirely. From our perspective, it may seem as though they are starving, but from human hospice we know that the sensation of hunger simply ceases to exist. When the body is not going to use the energy provided by the food anymore, why would it want to bother eating? If there are signs of discomfort in the digestive tract, several healing modalities can be used to prevent or soothe colic symptoms, including homeopathy, acupuncture, herbs, probiotics and essential oils.

Pain and the Will to Live
Fear of making our beloved horse friend suffer in pain is the number one concern haunting us and causing us to euthanize. What is overlooked when we are so preoccupied with this noble concern is that many animals would rather be in pain than no longer be alive. We probably all know humans who are in considerable pain, yet that does not automatically mean they want to die right away. Indeed, it is often the witnessing observer who is suffering the most.

If we can let go of our preconceived notions of what a life still worth living ought to look like, of how quickly dying ought to be happening... if we can let go of all of that and more, it brings us closer to perceiving what the animal's preference is.

Senior Care is Essential
Anyone who has taken care of an aging horse knows this can be quite involved. Hospice care can be even more so, though

(above) Sandy Rakowitz of One Heart Healing Center, Virginia, came close to euthanizing “Sunny” several times last winter. Instead of going with the standard considerations and putting the senior gelding down, she chose to provide hospice. With the use of essential oils, homeopathy and TTOUCH for palliative care, the horse’s loss of appetite and thirst, as well as arising colic symptoms, reversed. (Photo by Anne Buteau, courtesy of Sandy Rakowitz)
on its own (due to structural issues such as arthritis) presents a major logistical challenge leading to euthanasia, even though the animal's internal organs, including the heart, may still be working well. The extra TLC invested to maintain physical mobility can pay off greatly, adding months or years to our horse's life.

There seems to be a common notion amongst those inexperienced with hospice that dying should go faster than it does. We may find ourselves thinking, "Why is this taking so long?" Life in a body is rather complex, and unless the heart fails, leading to a sudden death, it can take some time to bring all physical and subtle energy processes involved to a closure.

Hospice Explained
When all the great care has made it possible for your horse to reach its full life span, eventually the horse is likely to stop eating. This can go on for a number of days in which the body tends to use up all its remaining reserves, oftentimes resulting in a marked decrease in weight. Unless there are signs of distress, no further action may be required for as long as the horse is still getting up on its own, other than making sure your horse stays dry and warm, can easily get to food and water IF desired, and is not bothered by bossy herd members. Make sure your horse has sufficient and clean bedding in which to lie as comfortably as possible. Hopefully, you can spend some quality time just being with your animal, expressing your love and gratitude for all it has brought to your life.

Oftentimes, however, we go into emotional turmoil instead. It is engrained in our being to want to provide nourishment for our animal friend. Unless you have familiarized yourself with the natural dying process, chances are you won't let the horse get past this stage, even though it may be going right along with the process, with no desire to die any sooner than it would on its own.

Hospice Can be Learned
Caring for the dying is an art, and unless we prepare for it ahead of time, chances are we won't feel up for the task. It will seem daunting to us rather than sacred. Whether the caretaker is aware of it or not, much happens in the last days and hours of a dying human or animal, in terms of getting ready internally for the great passage. It is a privilege indeed to have our loved one off, not holding it back, not trying to rush it, embracing the process and the farewell.

Specializing in holistic treatment options for animals for more than 20 years, Ella Bitet is a German veterinarian who lives and works in Santa Ynez Valley, California. Veterinary Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Craniosacral Work, all interspersed with TTEAMITOUCH, are among the modalities she offers. Her special passion is hospice care for animals, which led her to create the weekend seminar "SPIRITS in Transition," for people interested in providing end-of-life care for their animal loved ones. For event dates, e-mail spiritsintransition@verizon.net or visit www.spiritsintransition.com