

**RESOLUTION #8—2017
Regular Annual Session**

PENDING WAIVER OF PRIOR NOTICE

Submitted by—
Board of Directors

HANDLING OF COMPANION ANIMAL REMAINS

RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adopt the policy on Handling of Companion Animal Remains as noted below.

Handling of Companion Animal Remains

Veterinarians should recognize that an owner's attachment to an animal extends beyond death and that the sensitive handling of animal remains is an important aspect of veterinary practice. The AVMA recommends that veterinarians:

- Encourage prior planning so that owners are aware of their options and can easily communicate their preferences.
- Be aware of all legal restrictions relating to the disposition of remains and counsel owners accordingly.
- Handle remains in a sensitive manner such that is not unnecessarily disturbing to the owner or any other person with a valid reason to see the remains and that provides adequate containment of the remains.
- Use trustworthy service providers for postmortem care or interment of remains.
- If receiving remains following cremation, inspect remains upon receipt from service provider to verify the requested services have been properly executed.
- **When appropriate and available, preference should be given to providers in good standing with relevant professional associations.**

Statement about the Resolution

The AVMA has been monitoring reports about fraud and other improper handling of companion animal remains. Media coverage of this issue increased in 2013 when a sting operation brought into question whether individual cremations of companion animals were being properly performed in all cases. There have also been reports of dumped animal remains, in some cases traced back to pets that were contracted for proper disposal.

While these incidents remain isolated, it is important for the reputation of the profession that veterinarians be alerted to the importance of sensitive handling of remains by providing information regarding how to ensure their chosen vendors are transparent and follow appropriate standards. It is also important to draw attention to the sensitivities of owners in relation to the handling of remains and the needs to ensure legal compliance, manage expectations, and maintain an appropriately-supportive relationship with the client throughout the process, from euthanasia to final disposition of remains.

The AVMA is in the process of creating educational materials in support of this proposed policy that show veterinarians how to identify suitable vendors for services such as cremation, burial or animal memorials, either 1) by direct assessment or 2) via their membership in professional associations and participation in valid certification programs. These materials will assist veterinarians by outlining a simple vendor selection and review process they can implement to protect their reputation from being damaged by working with a vendor that is fraudulent or disrespectful to their clients.

Financial Impact: None

	Board of Directors	House Advisory Committee	Reference Committee #2	House of Delegates
Recommend Approval	X	X	X	X
Recommend Disapproval				
Recommend Referral to...				
No Recommendation				
Recommend Postpone Indefinitely				

Reference Committee 2 recommends the following amendments:

Handling of Companion Animal Remains

Veterinarians should recognize that an owner's attachment to an animal extends beyond death and that the sensitive handling of animal remains is an important aspect of veterinary practice. The AVMA recommends that veterinarians:

- **Encourage prior planning so that owners are aware of their options and can easily communicate their preferences.**
- **Be aware of all legal restrictions relating to the disposition of remains and counsel owners accordingly.**
- **Handle remains in a sensitive manner such that is not unnecessarily disturbing to the owner or any other person with a valid reason to see the remains.**
- **Take any necessary steps to ensure that service providers are trustworthy such as checking any relevant compliance and quality claims, visiting facilities, and inspecting remains upon handover to verify the requested services have been properly executed.**
- **~~When appropriate and available, preference should be given to providers in good standing with relevant professional associations.~~**

Your Reference Committee recommends that you vote FOR the Resolution as amended.