Techniques used to euthanase dogs and cats by Australia veterinarians

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Companion animal veterinarians are frequently required to perform euthanasia of canine and feline patients. There are many potential sources of fear, anxiety and stress for dogs and cats associated with euthanasia. How euthanasia is performed impacts the welfare of those animals, as well as the wellbeing of their guardians, and the veterinary team members involved. Pre-euthanasia sedation or anaesthesia, where not contraindicated, are considered best-practice and when administered appropriately may reduce adverse events during euthanasia.

We sought to document the current euthanasia practices of Australian veterinarians for both non-emergency and emergency euthanasia, with a particular interest in whether veterinarians used premedication or sedation prior to euthanasia.

In dogs, we found that most veterinarians (67.7%) administered premedication or sedation prior to non-emergency euthanasia, while under half (46.4%) did so in emergency euthanasia. The most common agents used were tiletamine/zolazepam, acepromazine and opioids, with the latter more common in emergency euthanasia. Pre-visit pharmaceuticals were administered in 6.4% of cases (the main agents being gabapentin and trazadone).

In cats, we found that most veterinarians (71.0%) administered premedication or sedation prior to non-emergency euthanasia, while just over half (52.4%) did so in emergency euthanasia. The most common agents used were tiletamine/zolazepam, acepromazine, opioids and alfaxalone, with opioids more common in emergency euthanasia. Pre-visit pharmaceuticals were administered in 9.6% of cases (the main agent being gabapentin).

There is scope for refinement of euthanasia techniques to minimise fear, anxiety and distress, and to maximise the welfare of dogs and cats in immediately prior to euthanasia.

For full study publications see

Cats: [https://www.mdpi.com/2306-7381/10/10/627](https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/GCgfCD1vlpTol0xMlfW4NIC?domain=mdpi.com)

Dogs: [https://www.mdpi.com/2306-7381/10/5/317](https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/jmKOCE8wmrtl5Mqn5fwpoUT?domain=mdpi.com)