



P.O Box 1770, Kingston 8, Jamaica, e-mail: secretary@jvma.org Website: www.jvma.org

The following questions were sent to the JVMA by Gleaner writer Carlene Davis on the disposal of dead animals. The Association's answers are in blue italics.

1. Is there a fee that veterinarians charge to dispose of dead animals? If so, what's the cost?

There may be a cost but the JVMA cannot comment on any fees charged by veterinarians for any service offered as these are set by each individual vet or practice, based on their individual costing and not by any consensus (which is against the law). As such, fees for disposal may vary from place to place.

2. What do veterinarians mean when they refer to disposal? *With regard to dead animals this would mean elimination of the body in a manner which protects public/environmental health – normally deep burial, cremation, or rendering (if available) followed by burial.*

Because of the nature of providing health care to our patients veterinarians deal with life and death every day. Our patients may die despite our best efforts or their owners may electively decide to euthanize to end their suffering. The owners may then be asked how they would like their pet's remains to be disposed of. For pet owners this is usually a very sensitive and emotional time and veterinarians make every effort to ease this process for our clients. Some clients opt to take the pet's remains home for burial or request that the veterinarian arrange for disposal of the remains.

a) What's the process or method? *The process that has existed over the years for clinics that offer disposal services is to enter into an arrangement with a contractor who is paid to retrieve the animals from the clinic from time to time for burial at an approved landfill site (an NSWMA ticket may be required). The bodies are bagged and stored in a freezer until the time they are collected. The contractor conveys them to the NSWMA site where they are buried communally. The bodies must be buried and are not left exposed. This process is at a cost to the clinics which therefore may pass that on to their clients.*

Other vets have tried to assist clients with burial of individual animals on their (the vets') properties if they have land space. This is not sustainable.

Another alternative would be to contract an incineration service which, prior to the establishment of Faithful Friends Crematorium, was much more costly.

3. What's your take on comments from the founder of Faithful Friends crematorium that veterinarians are just throwing dead animals in garbage trucks as a means of disposal? *The Association cannot speak to the veracity of those comments as we have no confirmed information that this has been done by any of our members. See 2(a) above which gives the established procedure. However, IF a veterinarian willfully misrepresents what they do to a client, that would be considered unethical.*



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For many years, long before the establishment of Faithful Friends, veterinarians across Jamaica have dealt with the issue of safe and ethical disposal of our deceased patients and are acutely conscious of the public health, safety and ethical concerns involved with this issue. We make every effort to ensure that best practice and the law is adhered to. The burial of animal remains in sites designated by the relevant government agencies is safe and ethical. We ensure that we utilize disposal services that follow ethical practices. Until the establishment of Faithful Friends, no cremation service has been readily available to veterinarians for many years.

4. Have you ever received any complaints that veterinarians are doing this? *The JVMA has not received any formal complaints from members of the public other than when it was brought up by the founder of Faithful Friends who gave an address at our General Meeting in March.*

a) He mentioned that about three weeks ago he met with the association and raised this issue, what measures if any have been implemented since then? *That was the second time that the JVMA has welcomed Mr. Ingledew to speak at our meetings. The Association endorses the service that he provides and encourages our members to present their clients with the option. We understand that many of our members do this and organize for the animals' remains to be received by him.*

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The Association doesn't really have the power to implement any measures, but we can present our members with ethical guidelines.

b) What measures will be taken in the future to ensure that this practice if happening doesn't continue? *The JVMA strives to promote the highest ethical standards among our members. Given the current discussion, the matter will be further covered at a future general meeting. The Association cannot give directives as to what each veterinary practice does, but we can provide ethical guidelines recognizing the extremely powerful human-animal bond that we as veterinarians espouse and promote for the benefit of animals and their human companions. Nevertheless, practitioners must comply with public health laws and regulations with regard to safe disposal.*

5. Are there sanctions for veterinarians who participate in this practice? If yes, what are they? *Members of the Association (not all vets are members) are governed by its code of ethics as set out in its Constitution & By-Laws. If there is a complaint lodged by a member of the public, our Ethics & Disciplinary Committee will investigate and meet with the veterinarian involved in order to deal with and hopefully resolve the issue.*



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Additionally

1) How many veterinarians do you have practicing across the island? *There are currently 120 vets registered to practice in Jamaica by the Jamaica Veterinary Board. Of those, about 100 are locally resident, with approximately 60 engaging in some form of clinical practice, be it in a physical clinic/hospital or mobile. There are about 30 physical practices across the island, some employing multiple vets.*

2) Are you concerned about the ways citizens are now disposing of dead animals?

Yes! Not just citizens, but the country in general:

- 1) *Dead animal carcasses are left to rot on our roads – rural or urban – causing a public health concern, an eyesore for many of our overseas visitors who view our country as less than humane for the apparent lack of care.*
- 2) *Persons who dispose of their dead pets or livestock by throwing the carcass away in some random location such as a gully, open lot or in bushes - If the animal had an infectious illness, or was treated with medication this can be harmful to other animals, or even the scavenging vultures.*
- 3) *The burning of a carcass at home or on a farm, for example using car tyres is environmentally unfriendly and contrary to fire regulations. It is often incomplete with some remnants left to decompose, therefore still requiring burial.*
- 4) *If animals are to be buried, it must be deep enough to prevent odour and digging up by scavenging stray dogs. White lime treatment is ideal.*

NOTE that the Veterinary Services Division of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture & Fisheries has its own state-of-the-art, emission-free incinerator which is used for animal remains/products that fall under its purview.