After Care for Visitations

Taking some extra precious time with a beloved pet after death and before the final body arrangements of cremation or burial can create truly unforgettable memories. Having the extra time after death, in the comfort of one’s home and family unit, allows for that special time:

- To say I love you,
- To say I’m sorry,
- To remember stories,
- To have a wake or funeral ceremony
- To share in a final toast,
- To allow all family members, including other pets, to have their time with the pet
- And the beautiful opportunity to ease into the good-bye.

As you prepare the pet’s body for this special time, there are a few things that will help in the process:

Eyes & Ears

- The pet’s eyes can be gently closed if that is the preferred look. A very easy way to keep the eyes closed is to place a small amount of Vaseline directly on the eyeballs which will act as an adhesive to keep the eyelids down.
  - If that does not work, using a small amount of Super Glue on the bottom of the eyelids will also work in securing the top lid and the bottom lid together.

- If the pet’s body needs to be chilled before taking him/her home, closing eyes prior to chilling is recommended as the eyes will change quickly and securing those eyelids over the eyeball will make for the most peaceful look.

- If the pet is elderly and the ears are cracked and chapped, rubbing a small amount of Vaseline on the ears will help them to stay supple.

Cleaning the Pet

- The body’s normal process is to release the bladder and bowels, requiring cleaning in the lower body area.
  - If the pet continues to leak fluids, the use of cotton to place in areas leaking will help create a barrier for the fluids. Areas to consider for the fluid releases will be nose, mouth, genitals, ears, and any wounds that might be on the pet’s body.

- If the pet has stains on their fur/hair such as blood or some products from the treatment of the pet, hydrogen peroxide will aid in getting those stains out of the hair/fur.

- Do not use hot water to bath a pet, as this will elevate the decomposition process. Instead use cold water for the cleaning process.
Dealing With Odors

- If there is an odor, professional products like Shiva Shade are an option, or for within the home a small amount of Febreeze or baking soda will aid in the elimination of the smell.

- Some people feel more comfortable in doing all they can to keep the pet's body from any after-death changes. In hotter and more humid areas of the country, it might make sense to lay some cooling elements such as bags of ice or ice packs under the blanket the pet is lying on to keep the body chilled.

Positioning

- After death, positioning the pet's legs will create a much more aesthetically pleasing look. This can be done by merely pulling the pet's legs tight into the body. If needed to keep the legs in that position, gently wrapping some surgical tape around the pet's entire body will help keep them in place for either a prettier viewing position, or to have the pet in position for placement in a casket.

- Another way to keep the legs tight into the pet's body is to lay the pet on his/her belly in a very natural pose, positioning the head between the front paws.

- If the pet's tongue is out, gently releasing the corners of the mouth will aid in getting the tongue back into the pet's mouth. If the preference is to have the mouth fully closed, a small amount of Super Glue along the lips will aid in that as well.

- For the most natural look for a pet, place the pet's wrapped body in a blanket with a small rolled up towel or pillow under the head.

Final Preparations

- Now that the pet is positioned beautifully and ready for family time, don't hesitate to lay special items next to your pet, such as their favorite toy, treats, flowers, and poignantly crafted letters.

- The final time for a pet to be at home and with the family is special and a very memorable. Take in every moment and create a setting where every member of the family will find this time to be peaceful and unforgettable.