

Preparing for Goodbye

A Gentle Companion Checklist for Families
Hearts & Halos Photography · Nova Scotia's South Shore

This checklist was created to gently support families preparing for a goodbye with a beloved pet. There is no perfect way to navigate this season of love and grief. Some families plan carefully. Others take things one hour at a time. Both are okay.

Use this guide to help reduce overwhelm, preserve meaningful memories, and focus on comfort, connection, and care during this time. Take only what feels helpful and leave the rest.

Comfort & Care

- Speak with your veterinarian about comfort, pain management, and quality of life
- Ask about what to expect physically and emotionally in the coming days
- Gather medications, mobility aids, blankets, or comfort items nearby
- Prepare a quiet, familiar resting space
- Offer favorite treats or gentle experiences if appropriate
- Keep routines soft and flexible
- Take breaks and ask for support when needed

Memory & Connection

- Take photographs — even simple, ordinary ones
- Record videos of small movements, sounds, or routines
- Save paw prints, fur clippings, collars, tags, or favorite toys
- Write down favorite memories or personality quirks
- Let children create drawings, letters, or goodbye notes
- Spend quiet time together without pressure or expectations
- Say the things you want them to hear

Family & Emotional Support

- Talk openly with family members in age-appropriate ways
- Decide who would like to be present

- Prepare children honestly and gently
- Consider how other pets may respond to changes in the home
- Allow space for tears, silence, guilt, relief, or uncertainty
- Remember there is no “right” emotional response

Planning & Practical Decisions

- Discuss aftercare options with your veterinarian
- Consider memorial wishes such as urns, framed photographs, jewelry, or garden stones
- Write down emergency clinic numbers if needed
- Prepare transportation plans if applicable
- Gather important paperwork or keepsakes in one place

Gentle Reminders

- You do not have to carry this alone
- Love can exist alongside grief, uncertainty, and fear
- Taking photographs is not “giving up”
- Wanting peace and comfort is an act of compassion
- The goal is not perfection — only love

“There is no perfect goodbye — only the love you carry into it.”

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Legacy, end-of-life & memorial photography · Nova Scotia's South Shore

This companion guide is intended for emotional support and practical preparation only and does not replace veterinary advice.