

# **Standards of Practice for Cremation of Pets**

**A joint project of the  
International Association of Pet Cemeteries and Crematories  
And the Cremation Association of North America**

## **SECTION 1. Terminology (Definitions)**

**1.1 Authorized Agent(s)** – The person(s) legally entitled to order the cremation of the remains. The authorized agent may be acting on behalf of a client, e.g., when a veterinarian works on behalf of the client.

**1.1.1 Client** – The owner of the pet, who may be the authorizing agent or who may engage someone (e.g., a veterinarian) to act as authorizing agent.

**1.2 Cremated Remains** - The remaining bone fragments after the cremation process is completed. *Note: the term “cremains” may also be used; the preferred term is cremated remains, but both are in common use.*

**1.3 Cremation** – The mechanical and/or thermal or other dissolution process that reduces remains to bone fragments. Cremation would include the subsequent processing and pulverization of bone fragments. Cremation may occur under any of the following methods”

**1.3.1 Communal Cremation** – To cremate several pets in a cremation chamber at one time with no regard for keeping pets separated. This process allows for the comingling of cremated remains. No cremated remains are returned to the client. *(Note: this may be described as “mass”, “group” or “combined” cremation; the preferred term is communal cremation).*

**Commentary on the following definition:** CANA and IAOPCC agree that the current industry-standard term “Individual Cremation” may be misinterpreted by the public and are committed to working together to replace its use with a more descriptive term such as *Individually Segregated or Separated Cremation*, making clear that more than one pet may be in the cremation chamber during cremation. IAOPCC and CANA are working on appropriate disclosure language that members may use to ensure that consumers understand the methodology that more than one pet is in the cremation chamber.

**1.3.2 Individual Cremation/Individual Segregated/Separated cremation**, commonly referred to in the industry as **Individual Cremation** – More than one pet is placed in the cremation chamber and cremated at the same time with some form of separation between pets such as trays, refractory bricks, or space; the pet’s location in crematory is documented and cremated remains of pets are removed one at a time and kept separated. Each pet’s individual cremated remains are returned to the client. *(Note: other terms include “individually separated,” or “individually partitioned” cremation; in every case the consumer and the*

*Authorizing Agent must be informed that more than one pet may be cremated simultaneously).*

**1.3.3 Private Cremation** – Only one pet is placed in the cremation chamber and cremated, with the cremated remains returned to the client. Private cremation may include viewing of the cremation by the client.

*It is critical that the cremation authority who performs the cremation make very clear to the client the method used in the cremation, and that the client authorize the cremation method and sign a disclaimer indicating they understand the methodology employed. See Section 4.*

**1.4 Cremation Chamber** – The enclosed space within which the cremation process takes place.

**1.5 Cremation Container** – The container in which the animal remains may be delivered to the crematory to be placed in the cremation chamber for cremation. Cremation containers, if used, should meet the following standards.

1. Be composed of a suitable combustible material;
2. Be sturdy enough for handling with ease;
3. Assure protection to the health and safety of the operator;
4. Meet moral codes for respect and dignity.

**1.6 Crematory Authority** – The legal entity or the authorized representative of the legal entity who conducts the cremation.

**1.7 Crematory or Crematorium** – The building that houses the cremation chamber.

**1.8 Holding Facility** – An area designated for the retention of remains prior to cremation within the crematory facilities that shall:

1. Comply with any applicable public health laws;
2. Preserve the dignity of the remains;
3. Recognize the personal integrity and health of the crematory authority personnel operating the cremation chamber.

**1.8.1 Holding Vault** – A place to store or hold remains; usually a walk-in cooler or freezer, or chest freezers.

**1.9 Remains** – The dead animal remains prior to cremation.

**1.10 Processed Remains** – The end result of pulverization, where the residual from the cremation process is cleaned leaving only bone fragments reduced to unidentifiable dimensions.

**1.11 Securely closed or sealable Container** – Any container in which processed remains can be placed and securely closed or sealed so as to prevent leakage of processed remains or the entrance of foreign materials.

## **SECTION 2. Receipt and Identification of Remains**

**2.1** Immediately upon taking custody of remains, a crematory authority shall verify that the remains bear a means of identification attached thereto. A crematory authority shall not accept unidentified remains when conducting a cremation where the remains will be returned to an Authorized Agent or client.

**2.2** Identification of the remains placed in the custody of a crematory authority should contain the following information:

1. Name of the Client;
2. Date and time of cremation, or as required by law;
3. Name and relationship of authorizing agent engaging crematory services, if acting on behalf of a client.

## **SECTION 3. Holding Remains for Cremation**

**3.1** When the crematory authority is unable to cremate the remains immediately upon taking custody therefore, the crematory authority shall provide a holding facility or holding vault as defined in Section 1.8.

**3.2** *Unless it is physically not possible due to size (e.g, in the case of a large animal pet such as a horse),* a crematory authority shall not hold the remains for cremation unless contained within an individual cremation container, as defined in Section 1.5, that can be securely closed or sealed.

**3.3** A crematory authority shall upon receipt examine cremation containers for any evidence of leakage of fluids from the remains therein (or punctures or damage to the cremation container which may permit future leakage prior to the cremation of the remains), and take steps to minimize the leakage (or repair the damage), for example by enclosing the container in a second cremation container.

**3.4** Remains shall be held only within a holding facility or vault in compliance with applicable public health regulations.

**3.5** Holding facilities shall be secure from access by anyone other than crematory authority personnel or parties accompanied by crematory authority personnel.

## **SECTION 4. Cremation of Remains**

**4.1** The Crematory Authority has a duty to ensure that the client and the authorizing agent understand the methods of and options for cremation.

**4.2** The Crematory Authority may offer clients the following cremation services (see definitions):

**4.2.1 Communal Cremation** – cremated remains not returned.

**4.2.2 Individual Cremation** – cremated remains returned to client.

**4.2.3 Private Cremation** – cremated remains returned to client.

**4.3** For Individual and Private cremations, maintaining the chain of identity is critical. Immediately prior to being placed within the cremation chamber, the identification of the remains shall be verified by the crematory authority and the identification from the outside of the cremation container shall be removed and placed near the cremation chamber control panel where it shall remain in place until the cremation process is complete.

**4.3.1** For individual cremations, the remains shall be separated by a barrier or by sufficient space to ensure that remains are not comingled, and the position of the remains within the cremation chamber recorded to ensure that the identity of cremated remains is ensured.

**4.4** A crematory authority may only simultaneously cremate more than one remains within the same cremation chamber upon having received such written authorization to do so from the authorizing agent of each remains to be cremated. A written authorization shall exempt the crematory authority from all liability for unintentional, incidental comingling of the products of the cremation process.

## **SECTION 5. Processing of Cremated Remains**

**5.1** Upon completion of the cremation, insofar as possible, all residual of the cremation process shall be removed from the cremation chamber and the chamber swept clean.

**5.1.1** For Individual Cremations, care must be taken to ensure that the residual from each cremated remains be removed separately, and be placed within a separate container or tray to ensure against co-mingling with other cremated remains; and the identification removed from the control panel area and attached to the container or tray to await final processing. The cremated remains closest to the door of the cremation chamber should be removed prior to retrieval of the cremated remains located in the back of the cremation chamber.

**5.1.2** For Private Cremations, the residual shall be removed and be placed within a container or tray and the identification removed from the control panel area and attached to the container or tray to await final processing.

**5.2** All residual of the cremation process shall undergo final processing to comply with applicable legal requirements. In jurisdictions lacking requirements, it is recommended that the residual be manually cleaned of anything other than bone fragments and the fragments then be processed so as to reduce them to unidentifiable dimension (*the recommended dimension is 1/8 inch or smaller*).

**5.2.1** In the case of communal cremation, where cremated remains are not to be returned to the client, further processing need only be sufficient to accommodate scattering or other disposition.

**5.3** All metallic items, removed from the cremated remains, shall be disposed of by the crematory authority unless authority to do otherwise is specifically granted in writing. Crematory authority's are encouraged to undertake recycling of any implants, metal, prostheses, etc., with proceeds from recycling, if any, to be donated to a pet industry charity.

**5.3.1** Crematory authorities are encouraged to adopt the environmentally sound practice of recycling prosthetic implants and metal items that are left after the cremation of remains. Recycling must be conducted in a manner that complies with state and provincial regulations.

## **SECTION 6. Packaging of Cremated Remains**

**6.1** The entire processed remains shall be placed in a container that can be securely closed or sealed as defined in Section 1.11. The sealable container contents shall not be contaminated with any other object unless specific authorization has been received from the authorizing agent.

**6.2** The sealable container together with the identification of the cremated remains shall be placed within a temporary container or the designated receptacle ordered by the authorizing agent. Should the cremated remains within the sealable container not adequately fill the container's interior dimensions, the extra space may be filled with shredded paper or clean absorbent cotton and the lid or top then securely closed.

**6.3** If the entire processed remains will not fit within the dimensions of the designated receptacle, a larger receptacle shall be used.

**6.4** When a temporary container is used to return the processed remains, it is recommended that the container be placed within a corrugated box and all box seams secured to increase the integrity of that container. The outside of the container shall be clearly identified with the name of the authorizing agent who ordered the cremation.

## **SECTION 7. Disposition of Cremated Remains**

**7.1** A crematory authority shall keep accurate records of all cremations performed, including disposition, for a period of not less than three (3) consecutive years or such time as may be required by law or regulation relating to pet cremation.

**7.2** Any legal forms of cremation authorization shall contain wording that will hold harmless a crematory authority from the disposition of unclaimed cremated remains after a stated period of time.

**7.3** With written permission from the authorizing agent, a crematory may dispose of cremated remains in any legal manner. For cremated remains from communal cremations, the Crematory Authority shall disclose to the client and the authorizing agent in writing the means typically employed by the Crematory Authority for the respectful disposition of cremated remains.