

Stephen describes his first experience of pet loss and how it shaped the way he runs his business today:

"My first encounter with the loss of a pet was back in the early 1980s when I was working in Bahrain and helping out on a voluntary basis with the Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It was a delightful little stray cat that had been brought in to our Sanctuary with an injured leg. My wife and I took him home to see if he could be helped. Unfortunately the vet diagnosed a degenerative bone disorder and he eventually had to be put to sleep. It was a young Australian locum vet on at the time (there were only two or three vets in practice on the island then) and we asked her what would happen to the body. She replied that although she would like to say someone would come and carefully carry out a cremation the truth was the body would be left for the Municipality to be taken to the rubbish dump. We therefore decided to take him to the animal sanctuary and my first experience of this type of work was digging a grave in 35 degree heat in the desert where we buried him with his favourite toy between his paws.

"The point is that the vet could easily have told us that everything would be taken care of nicely and we would have been none the wiser. But she didn't, and it gave us the chance to make our own decision. Bearing in mind this was nearly 30 years ago on an island in the Gulf it is incredible to think we received better veterinary advice then than most people now receive in the UK where everything tends to be glossed over. It is time pet owners were given respect to make their own decisions. Any cremation services should have clear descriptions of the handling and cremation procedures. It does not have to go into any unpleasant detail and it does not have to involve luxury and expensive procedures - simple care, respect, attention to detail and above all putting the pet owner first is all that is required."