

A White Paper on the Implementation of Alkaline Hydrolysis in the Veterinary Practice

By Dr. Greg Helton

Change is hard. Even when evidence in favor of the change is overwhelming positive, change is hard. As a veterinarian treating companion animals for any length of time you have probably been presented with either an early stage exposure to ethylene glycol in the intoxicant stage or a late stage exposure in the anuric stage. The Humane Society Legislative Fund estimated that 10,000 to 90,000 animals are poisoned each year after ingesting ethylene glycol. The best outcome for the owner is frightening, extremely resource intensive and has the potential for chronic renal disease. The worst outcome, as you well know, is death. Despite being a well identified problem in veterinary medicine for many years it still took over a decade to make any appreciable progress in convincing the antifreeze producing industry to even add a bittering agent to the current product even when non-toxic alternatives have been widely available albeit at a higher monetary cost for many years.

Now daily news is seeded with the harbingers of climate change. At every turn we are admonished to take actions both on a personal and civic level to reduce the amount of pollutants we daily place into the atmosphere. Whether you personally agree or disagree with the future predictions it is unlikely you can disagree that the condition of our environment is considerably different now than it was at the outset of the industrial revolution.

So if there was a choice you could make as a responsible professional or at least a choice you could offer to your clients as a responsible professional wouldn't that be wise? As veterinarians we daily use our knowledge to the betterment of our animal patients and the pet owning public. We daily explain to our clients the reasons for the necessity of preventative care. We justify our decisions and the related expense for interventional care. Our intended outcomes are to make things better. For the health of our patients, for the concerns of our clients and lastly for the mental and financial satisfaction from our chosen career.

I decided to write this white paper for my clients and for my practice, Atlanta Pet Hospice, on the critical reasons why I began transitioning my clients to the green, environmentally friendly form of cremation known as Alkaline Hydrolysis, commonly known by the trade name Aquamation. The evidence is overwhelming in favor of Aquamation but here are a few of the main reasons you should consider offering this option to your clients.

- With Aquamation there are **absolutely no air emissions!** In a flame based cremation there approximately 200 kg of greenhouse gases released.
- Aquamation uses 95% less energy than is used in flame cremating the same size animal for small to medium size animals. As the size of the animal rises the proportional amount of energy used drops for Aquamation.
- Older cremator ovens actually emit a fine burnt ash into the surrounding neighborhood.

- Crematories release mercury into the environment and at this time there is no federal standard or law to make mercury filters mandatory.
- All orthopedic implants including plates, screws and total hips are unaffected by the Aquamation process and can be reused.
- Prion based contagions will be released into the atmosphere during cremation. Prions, are destroyed during Aquamation.

The other component in the process of change is service. Will I get the same level of care and service from my Aquamation provider that I currently do from my current crematory provider? Let me assure you that I have found the level of professional service extended to me and my clients by Heavenly Paws (www.heavenlypawsatlanta.com) to far exceed all of my expectations of a new business partner. The service I have received from Heavenly Paws since opening my practice is the other main reason I was prompted to write this paper. This is a Georgia based, family owned business that strives to be a trusted and long term provider of afterlife care for your patients. I see the same level of commitment from them that I strive to offer my clients daily. I feel very blessed to have this company become a crucial asset to my practice

As I eluded to previously, at my age and length of time in the profession, I'm not a big proponent of change, especially when I am helping a client make sometimes very emotional end of life decisions. But when faced with the overwhelming evidence of the sustainability of this process over flame based cremation and the level of care provided by the provider of the process I realized that as a responsible practitioner I had to at least offer my clients a choice. And that is exactly what I do. What I have found overwhelming is this. Clients dealing with the grief of loss of their pet actually are pleased with this choice and are ultimately impressed that I wanted to offer them choices, irrespective of what they chose even though overwhelmingly they have chosen Aquamation. Many of these clients choose Aquamation even when they had had a very favorable previous experience with one of the areas traditional pet crematoriums. For the most part people want to do the best thing, and I have found that my clients have been pleased that they could be environmentally friendly while permanently memorializing their pet. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time if I can answer any questions or be of assistance to you or your practice.

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