Thanks for joining us for our third installment! Let's review:

- **Part 1**: We discussed what hospice is and how it applies to the final days with your True Companion.
- **Part 2**: We talked about what signs to look for, what to think about, and a few practical things you can do to partner with your vet and take charge of that time.

But I firmly believe there is more to hospice care than that, which brings us to Part 3 - taking care of you!

Hospice for pets is a "movement" (for lack of a better word) which is building in strength for good reason—losing a pet is hard. Really hard. But making the decision to accept where you are and seek out what hospice care means in your situation gives you, I think, an advantage. You are planning ahead. You understand your role in hospice care and have accepted what is ahead of you. What's more, you've decided to face it, no matter how much you don't want the
end result—and the reality is, nobody wants to sign up for a heart ache.

But by bringing yourself to this point, you have taken ownership of your role in your pet's final time, exerted control over your circumstances, and created your own opportunity to answer key questions like, “What do I want this to look like? What do I want my pet’s last day to be like?” You now get the chance to shape one of life's most difficult moments; to meet it on your own terms, and those of your beloved pet. This can take different forms, depending on what you want the experience to be for both you and your pet.

**Time**

Some people want to spend every possible moment with their pet. The next questions then will rely heavily on partnership with your vet to discuss what the end stages of your pet's disease might look like to make sure you're as prepared as possible:

- What will a natural death look like from this disease?
- How will your pet's needs change as the time draws near?
- What emergencies might arise, and how will you handle them?
- Can you accept the possibility of your pet dying while you're away?

**Control**

Some people want to have a carefully planned day filled with all your pet's favorite things. The questions then take a different direction:

- Who will come and visit?
- Will you will prepare his favorite meal? Maybe let her indulge in something she's always wanted, but has been a no-no?
- Will you go to his favorite spot? Is that where you'll say goodbye, or just for some "us" time first?
- Did he used to love doing something he hasn't been able to do in a long time? Is there a way you can make it happen just once more?

These are all great things sure to make the time special, but clearly require planning ahead. So, it will be important to not wait too long, or you could end up missing the opportunity. You must trade a bit of time in order to have a bit more control. Your vet can help you decide your window of opportunity based on a number of factors.
In the End, It's All About You!

You are your pet's advocate. He has trusted you to know what's best thus far, and you'll speak for him in how you plan his final days and weeks as you provide hospice care. But you have to remember to also be your OWN advocate, for both you and your family.

- What are your fears?
- What do you want to do with your pet in the time you have remaining?
- What would help YOU through this transition?
- Do you have resources to prepare you emotionally? Would counseling be helpful?

How you approach your hospice time with your pet can shape your memories of your True Companion for all time, and can be one of the best bonding experiences of your lives for your pet, your family, and you. But you can't forget you.

No one wants to lose a pet, but you don't need to go through it alone. A proper partnership with your vet and other professionals can make the experience something you treasure. If you reach out for help, you may be surprised by the number of resources available to you. In fact, stay tuned. We will have some exciting news in coming weeks around hospice for pets. Until then, stay frosty!