

California Association of Public Cemeteries



Position Statement for Pet Cemeteries

The framework of this position statement is from direct conversations that Public Cemetery officials and staff have had with families wishing to bury their pets in the same community cemetery as is used by the caregiver of the pet. The lifestyles of families today may include a pet that will have an intimate bond that carries a devotion that is very meaningful to the family. This devotion is sustained through the life of the pet that ultimately may have a shorter lifespan than the caregiver. The death of the pet may be traumatic and difficult and Public Cemetery Districts are working to give relief to these families.

Current Authorization

Currently the California Health and Safety Code §9001 restricts Public Cemetery Districts to bury human remains only. This burial can only be done via traditional casketed burial in ground or by cremation in ground or above ground.

Current Limitations

The constraint of only burial of human remains has left many families dissatisfied by not being able to bury pets for which they are caregivers. The bond between families and their animal companions is very strong and we are not meeting the needs of our public by not accommodating their need to bury their animal companions.

Need for Pet Burial

People grieve for their companions whether they are human or animal. If allowed to create a pet cemetery Public Cemetery Districts would be able to help families work through the grieving process as well as give them a lasting place to visit as they memorialize their companions.

Many Public Cemeteries are located with smaller populations and are the only cemetery for residents who wish for burial in their community. The current limitation of burial human remains only gives way to angst and frustration to those residents who have a companionship relationship with a pet. They feel that they are unable to give their pets a final resting place and it leaves many grieving as they are dealing with final closure in their loss.

There are very few Pet Cemetery options in California and local laws in most urban areas prohibit the ground burial of any animal. With that prohibition in mind, most people would expect to have a burial option for their pets where they would be able to visit or memorialize them in a proper manner. Public Cemetery Districts are throughout California and an authorization to allow public cemeteries to have a pet cemetery makes sense for the public and the cemetery.

How to Fulfill this Need

The ability for a Public Cemetery District to meet this need of their public can be done with a change of authorization under the current Health and Safety Code sections that pertain to Public Cemetery Districts. This authorization would give Public Cemeteries an opportunity to give families a final resting place for their beloved pets in an area that would be set aside for pet burial only.

The realization for this opportunity would be only if the community within a public cemetery boundaries felt that this was a necessary need.