

Pet Aquamation

The same chemistry, a gentler process, and how to find it.

The first question most people ask about pet aquamation is whether it is the same process used for people. It is. A body, animal or human, is placed in a stainless-steel vessel with an alkaline solution, heated, and over several hours the soft tissue dissolves through hydrolysis. What remains is bone mineral, processed into a white powder and returned to the family.

The second question is why anyone would choose it over flame cremation for a pet. The answer is the same as for people, scaled down: less energy, no combustion emissions, and a gentler process that some owners find meaningful. The third question, and the one this guide answers, is where to find it and what it involves.

How It Works for Pets

The vessel. Pet units are smaller than human systems and are built for veterinary and pet use, handling everything from small pets to large dogs.

The solution. Water and an alkaline salt. The alkaline environment speeds up hydrolysis, breaking proteins into amino acids, fats into fatty-acid salts, and carbohydrates into simple sugars — the same chemistry as natural decomposition, accelerated.

Temperature and time. Most pet aquamation runs at a lower-heat setting, which takes anywhere from several hours to overnight depending on the animal's size. Some facilities use a higher-heat, pressurised system that finishes faster. The lower-heat process uses less energy per cycle but takes longer.

The remains and effluent. Bone fragments are dried and ground into a fine white powder, whiter and somewhat more voluminous than flame-cremated remains. The liquid byproduct is a sterile, alkaline solution of amino acids, sugars, and mineral salts, discharged to the municipal sewer as industrial wastewater or, in some places, used as a soil amendment. It contains no pathogens, no DNA, and no recognisable biological material.

The Cost, in Plain Terms

Pet aquamation typically costs a modest premium over pet flame cremation, reflecting the higher cost of the equipment and the longer cycle. The gap is expected to narrow as more providers enter the market. As with people, private (individual) processing — where only your pet’s remains are returned — costs more than communal processing.

Where to Find It

Pet aquamation is legal in every state where human aquamation is legal, plus some states that have allowed it for animals specifically. What actually determines availability is whether a provider has installed equipment and is accepting clients. Unlike human aquamation, which is offered by funeral homes, pet aquamation is offered by pet crematories that have added equipment, veterinary clinics, and a small but growing set of businesses that specialise in water cremation for animals.

There is no single national directory yet. The most reliable methods are to ask your veterinarian, who is usually the first point of contact when a pet dies and often has relationships with local providers, and to search for your city or state alongside the various terms in use: aquamation, water cremation, alkaline hydrolysis, bio-cremation.

Pet Aquamation vs. Pet Flame Cremation

DIMENSION	FLAME CREMATION	AQUAMATION
Energy use	higher	lower
Emissions	from natural-gas combustion	electricity only
Remains	grey, slightly coarse	white, finer, more voluminous
Processing time	one to two hours	several hours to overnight
Availability	universal	growing but uneven
Cost	lower	a modest premium

The Emotional Dimension

Owners who choose aquamation often cite the gentleness of the process; “water, not fire” comes up repeatedly. Worth acknowledging honestly: from the pet’s perspective there is no difference, since the animal is already gone before either process begins. The difference is

entirely in the living person's experience of the choice, and that difference is valid. Grief is not rational, and the comfort of knowing a pet was treated gently — by your own definition of gently — is real and worth respecting. On the practical side, the remains from aquamation are whiter, finer, and somewhat more voluminous, which can matter to families planning to scatter them or plant them with a tree urn.

A NOTE ON THIS GUIDE

This guide is for general information and reflects conditions as of 2026. Legal status, availability, and costs change over time; confirm current details before making arrangements. Nothing here is legal, medical, or financial advice.