

EVERY weekend Tom Jorgensen drives out to his hobby farm west of the Gold Coast and scatters ashes.

The self-described “animal nutter” says the ashes are those of animals cremated at his Molendinar crematorium, Pet Angel.

It’s for the animals that can’t go home — or who don’t have a place to go home to, such as roadkill or injured wildlife.

“It’s two hours away, it’s beautiful and they go to the highest point of the farm,” Mr Jorgensen says of their final resting spot.

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📷 Founder Tom Jorgensen. Picture: Jerad Williams

“There’s a ridge that runs out back and it’s absolutely the highest point, so they lie there with a 270 degree view.”

Softly spoken and calm, Mr Jorgensen doesn’t like to do things by halves.

After decades of success in the construction industry, it was the haunting image of a woman leaving a vet clinic with her pet’s ashes in a plastic bag, distraught, that made him think there had to be a better way of saying goodbye to pets.

[GALLERY: BEST PETS ON THE GOLD COAST](#)



Following a year of research, the 67-year-old opened up the Gold Coast's first pet crematorium in March 2015, determined to make it more personal and deserving for the creatures that loyally stayed by their owners' sides throughout the years.

It was difficult at first. Mr Jorgensen recounts that for months, he and a small handful of staff would wait ... and wait for someone to call for their services.

Days could go by without any pets coming through — but finally that eventually changed as word got around.

HUSBAND LOSES WIFE'S LEG WHILE ON TRIP TO THE SHOPS



One of their two cremators. Picture: Jerad Williams



The temperature heats up to 1000C. Picture: Jerad Williams

Now the business, situated inconspicuously in the middle of the Molendinar industrial estate, oversees up to 30 pet cremations every day between its 13 staff.

The warehouse was custom built to house an office upstairs, with a reception area at the front and an open plan back-of-house.

One side of reception holds the urns and scatterboxes the company uses, ranging from teak to walnut to silver urns, all with their names engraved on a small plaque.

Mr Jorgensen says they also sell caskets, of which the sides can be decorated with images of the pet, but they are more popular in the United States than in Australia.



They also have pet caskets. Picture: Jerad Williams



📷 Mr Jorgensen with the second cremator. Picture: Jerad Williams



📷 Everything is well organised. Picture: Jerad Williams

“I can guarantee if you come to us, you’re getting your ashes back. That’s 100 per cent true. We are crazy checkers.”

Each pet is designated a small basket, a steel tag with an individual number and a neat clipboard of information that follows the pet throughout the process.

Before pets are placed into the cremation chambers, their paw prints are taken and locks of fur retained, should the owner so choose.

Cremating takes place each day from 8am until about 1pm.



📷 Employee Aaron Johnson drives deceased pets to the crematorium, as well as cremated pets back to their owners. Picture: Jerad Williams



📷 The Remembrance Room. Picture: Jerad Williams

Mr Jorgensen explains that animals are checked for identifying features and their individual steel tag before they are placed individually inside the 1000C chamber.

Depending on the size of the pet, it takes just minutes.

Afterwards, their remains are processed before being deposited into a small bag, which is then placed inside their urns or scatterboxes.

Different staff perform checks throughout the day so that there are no mix ups.



📷 The van and body storage cool room. Picture: Jerad Williams

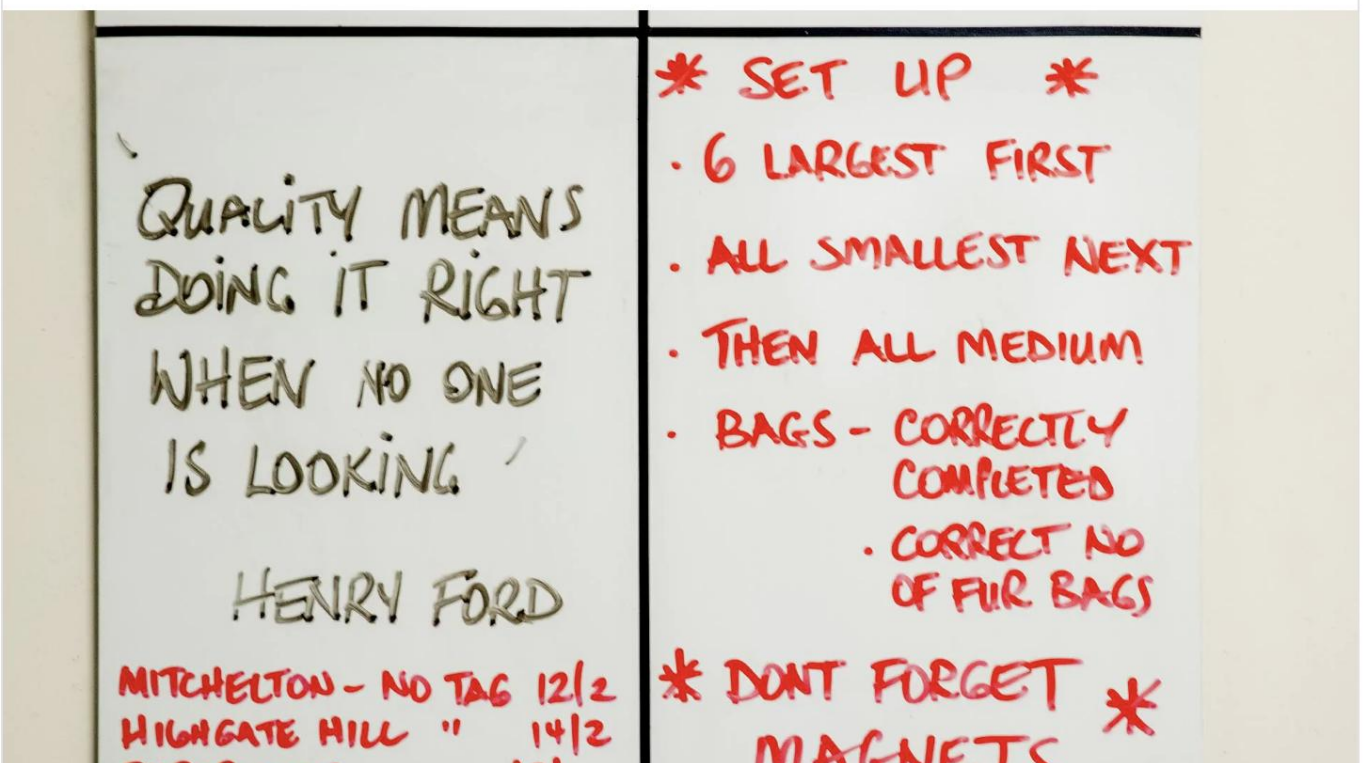
In the corner of the main area, a quote is neatly written onto the board, one of two sayings Mr Jorgensen says he likes to remember.

“Quality means doing it right when no one is looking,” reads the first quote by Henry Ford.

“There’s no right way to do a wrong thing,” is the second one he swears by.

“That’s how I live my life,” Mr Jorgensen says.

Mr Jorgensen says it can be difficult at times to work in the industry and there’s not a week that goes by where the staff don’t cry.



📷 A quote and some intructions. Picture: Jerad Williams

But it also comes with enormous rewards.

“In so many businesses ... you only ever get told what you did wrong, here we get thanks, we get cards, we get bottles of wine, flowers ... you feel really good about yourself at the end of the day,” he says.

“It’s extremely satisfying. It has its terribly sad moments though.

“I can remember this family ... they got the kids home from school early, mum dad, two boys and they were all crying uncontrollably. It wasn’t easy, because (back then) I did everything, I was on the vans, I did the cremating. We try so hard. We try so hard.”

Pet Angels recently opened its Brisbane office and will open its Newcastle office in the coming months.