

When Your Pet Dies ... **... Helping You to Cope**

Many people find their own way of coping with the loss of a pet, but we hope that some of the following advice will help make things easier.

It is perfectly natural to feel upset and emotional when your pet dies - after all, he or she has been part of your life and you have looked after, loved, fed and enjoyed his or her company.

It is important to give yourself time to get over your loss. No-one can say exactly how long this will take, because everyone is different. You may feel better after a few weeks, but you may still become upset when remembering your pet's death after several years.

✿ Share Your Feelings

Talk about your pet's death, especially to friends and relatives who have had a similar experience. It will probably surprise you that many other people share your feelings and have been upset over a pet's death. If you find it too upsetting to talk to someone, you may find it helpful to write your thoughts and feelings down.

✿ Try Not to Feel Guilty

Try not to blame yourself for your pet's death. If you cared for your pet and took it to your veterinary surgeon when it was ill, you could not have done anything more. Try not to blame other people either, vets cannot always save an animal's life. If your pet died as a result of an accident, there was probably nothing you could have done to prevent this.

✿ If Your Pet is Put to Sleep

If your pet is very ill and unlikely to recover, your vet may suggest that it is put to sleep, to make the death easier and peaceful. This is often a very difficult decision to make, but is one of the kindest acts that you, as an owner, can do for your pet. Do not be afraid to show how upset you are in front of the vet - we all understand how difficult the decision is and are sympathetic to your feelings. Talk about these fears to your vet.

✿ Feeling Angry

It is perfectly natural to feel angry when your pet dies or to feel that his or her death was "unfair", particularly if your pet had a serious disease or was involved in an accident. These emotions are part of the process of coming to terms with your loss.

✿ Treasure Your Memories

It is normal to think about how much you will miss your pet, but do not forget the good things in your pet's life - his or her funny habits, what you loved most about him or her and the mutual pleasure you gave each other.

✿ In Remembrance

It may help if you hold a special ceremony of remembrance in honour of your pet, perhaps burying a memento or planting a tree or shrub in their favourite part of the garden. This is a good opportunity to let out some of your emotions and/or show your pet the respect it deserves.

✿ Should I Get A New Pet?

This is something only you can decide. You may feel that no other pet can take your pet's old place, but if you feel that the time is right to get a new pet then that is fine too. Allow yourself time to think about and listen to your own feelings.

Further Reading:

- ✿ **'Death of an Animal Friend'**
Produced by the Society for Companion Animal Studies.
Available from: SCAS, The Blue Cross, Shilton Rd, Burford, Oxon, OX18 4PF.

- ✿ **'Absent Friend'**
by **Laura and Martyn Lee.**
Published by Henston. Available at all good bookshops.

- ✿ **'Goodbye, Dear Friend'**
by **Virginia Ironside.**
Published by Robson. Available at all good bookshops.

If you would like any further help or advice about coming to terms with your pet's death, please do not hesitate to contact any of our veterinary surgeons or telephone the Blue Cross bereavement counselling service on 0800-0966606.



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August 2010



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