



Animal House
Veterinary surgery

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HELP WITH PET BEREAVEMENT

We all feel sad when a pet of our dies. We have a few tips and pointers to help if you find yourself in this unfortunate situation.

WHY WE FEEL SO SAD

A pet to most people is part of the family. When a pet passes on we are losing a being who has shared our home and our attention often over years. Some people bond with their pet as their main companion, always at home, always looking forward to seeing them and never disagreeing with them. The loss of a pet also encompasses the change of our usual habits, as we no longer have to feed and care for our animal. This unwanted habit change is in itself often a trial to cope with.

It is perfectly understandable that we grieve this loss and we can recognize that it is normal and reasonable to do so.

EUTHANASIA

Not all animals die in their sleep. As owners we are the ones responsible for managing any of our animals' illnesses and ultimately, death. It is natural to feel guilty about considering euthanasia. We can feel angry that our pet cannot be saved and we are faced with a difficult decision of letting nature take its course or opting for having our pet 'put to sleep'. None of us are keen to euthanase any animal but at times it is the kindest option available. Any vet will outlay clearly your choices and the decision is yours and yours alone about which route to adopt. When given clear information, with no pressure, you can come to your own conclusion. Take heart that no vet will go through with euthanasia if it is an unreasonable option. We take great care in making our patients comfortable and the quick acting injection we give is designed to literally send the animal into a deep sleep after which their heart stops. Our attitude is to allow respect and dignity for the animal when he or she has come to the end of life's journey. You can reassure yourself that your final decision was the right one for the circumstances.

GRIEVING

We all grieve in different ways. It is usual for a lot of people's first response to be disbelief. It is hard to come to terms with the fact that our pet is no longer with us. The house can feel empty and it can feel that part of us is missing. Sometimes we can be very business-like and practical at the time but sadness overtakes us later. It is typical to feel sad and low for a while. It is not unusual to cry, no matter how old you are or whether you are a delicate lady or a big burly man. Sometimes lack of understanding from others magnifies the feeling of loss and makes us feel that we shouldn't be experiencing grief for a pet. It helps if you have a friend you can talk to about your grief. Many people have grieved for a pet and you are not alone. If you do not know someone who you can communicate with about your loss you can come and talk to someone at the surgery as we know how it feels.

CHILDREN

Children's first experience of death is often that of the family pet. It is important to handle this sensitively. Honesty is the best policy. Explain to a child what will happen and why and allow

them to ask questions. Put it in terms that the child will understand and be clear. Do not use vague terms like, 'put to sleep' as children find it confusing. Children often benefit by having time to say goodbye and leaving drawings or tokens of their affection for the deceased pet. It is a good idea to plant some seeds or flowers in memory of the old pet.

WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

Some people do not want to put themselves in the position of ever losing a pet again and choose not to have another pet. This is a perfectly reasonable conclusion if it is right for you. As time goes by you can still update your position on the decision if you want to. Some people cannot stand living without a pet in their home and quickly introduce a new one to distract them from the sadness of loss. This is also a valid decision especially if we are aware that no two animals are the same

And the new pet will be the beginning of a new relationship not the continuation of the old one. We can help you to find a new pet if you wish. Some people feel guilty about buying a new pet on purpose and feel that it is in some way letting the old pet down. Some people like this feel differently if a new pet needs them and in some way has chosen them rather than the people looking for a pet. We have a long list of rescues full of animals who need a home and in these cases a rescue pet can be mutually beneficial.

HELPFUL BOOKS

Goodbye Dear Friend

By Virginia Ironside
Robson Books

Death of an Animal Friend

Society for Companion Animal Studies
Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxfordshire. OX11 4PF

Absent Friend

By Martyn and Laura Lee
Ringpress books