

Children and bereavement

The truth is very important where children are concerned and in order to help a child with pet loss the following should be taken into consideration:

- What did the pet actually mean to the child
- The child's understanding of death
- The way in which the actual death is handled

“Our family's participation in the euthanasia of Jenny was a fitting farewell to a loyal companion from the girl who loved her. It was also one in which my daughter felt good about how she chose to say her final goodbyes. Savannah wanted to be with Jenny right up to the end. Later that day she told her father that she wanted to be a veterinarian. She was taught that euthanasia is a gift that ends pain and suffering. Jenny was in pain and we were not going to allow her to suffer. She had an inoperable tumor that was making it difficult for her to breathe; she was senile and severely arthritic.”

The loss of a family pet can affect all members of the family but if the parents can accept the death as a 'common' loss and the family grieves together for that loss, this will encourage the child to show its feelings too.

Planning ways to say goodbye will give each individual member of the family something special to remember as the healing process begins.

“In their hearts and their memories and their laughter, Fox was still there, always and forever.”

When someone seeks help or support with pet bereavement with specific regard to 'counselling', they are looking for a way to cope with and survive their loss.

A counsellor should not only be able to provide information and reassurance after the loss of a pet but also before the pet dies.

In my profession as a dog walker and cat visitor over the past 15 years, I have lost many companions, cats and dogs belonging to clients to whom I have provided an individual service. Being used as a 'sounding-board' helped me immensely with my studies and now more so with the qualities required as a counsellor.

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Emotions need to be dealt with as and when they arise enabling the balance in your life to return at a comfortable pace.

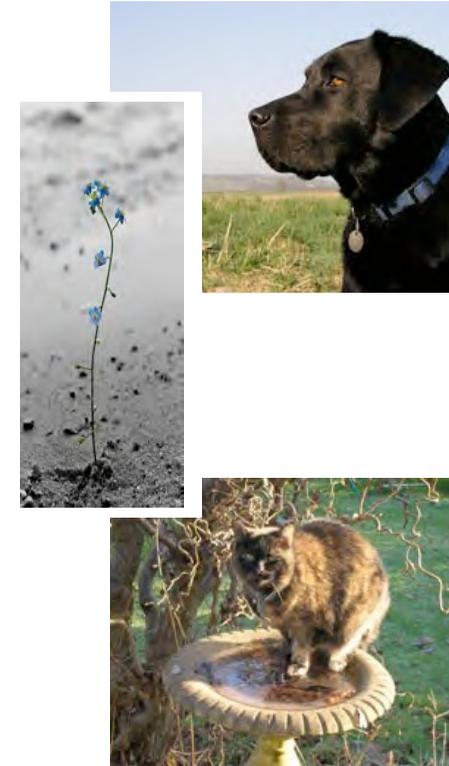
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Reference [MMCALS leaflet \(June 2016\)](#)

MOGGIES and MUTTIES



Companion Animal Loss Support

Before the Decision
During the Heartache
After the Journey

Time to say goodbye

Some people are able to accept this as the natural conclusion of their pet's time with them but, if the strength of the bond shared with a pet was so deep you must expect to experience an equal depth of loss.

Stages of grief

Emotions such as crying and feeling low will be felt by most of us as we experience the stages of grief. Others might well become generally disinterested in life and experience a sense of isolation and anxiety. It's also common for physical signs of fatigue, loss of appetite, headaches and sleeplessness to occur further influencing the way that we grieve.

Where a family are trying to cope with the loss of a family pet there could be several ways in which each member of the family will deal with the loss depending on their own personal circumstances at the time.

It is perfectly normal and acceptable to grieve over the loss of a pet and, if we give ourselves 'permission to grieve', the grief will gradually dissolve. It is only grief that has never been faced that is never resolved.

As grief drains the emotional battery, you will need to recharge more often so give yourself time to rest.

The relationship shared with each pet is quite unique and we all grieve differently over individual pets.

The final resting place

We all react differently to death through our different views and beliefs but, the most important thing is to ensure that your companion's remains are treated in accordance with your wishes and expectations.

The final task of laying your companion to rest should be undertaken in a manner that is comforting and acceptable to you.



A vet writes:

Home euthanasia will always stand out as some of the most rewarding and memorable moments of my work. If done well, it can be deeply rewarding and warrant the extra time and trouble it involves. I think owners are always extremely grateful for the effort.

Companion Animal Death (Mary F Stewart)

Multiple household pets

Animals certainly show changes in their behavioural patterns when they lose a close animal or human companion.

All animals are individuals and counselling help from an animal behaviourist is available if you have long-term problems and, talking things through may well be the best means of establishing the correct way to treat your pet's particular problems.

Fortunately, although many animals do experience behavioural changes when they lose a companion, the vast majority recover and resume normal lives.

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There is no set time for grieving and no right time for getting another pet. The decision to get another pet is extremely personal and only you will know if you're truly ready.

Even if you make a decision soon after the death of your pet, it is best to allow a little time to pass before you actually acquire your new companion so that you are ready to accept it into your heart as well as your home.

If it is possible don't deny yourself the opportunity to love and be loved by another pet if that is what you really want. There is no better tribute to your previous pet than your willingness and readiness to start a new relationship.

