

Organisations who offer support and information

Pet Bereavement Support Service:

(Run by the pet charity, The Blue Cross and Society for Companion Animal Studies)

Support Line: **0800 096 6606**

Open daily 8.30am-8.30pm; calls free and confidential

Email support: **pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk**

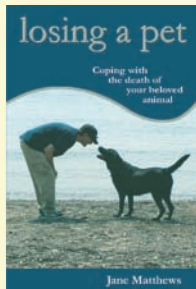
www.bluecross.org.uk

EASE Preparing for Pet Loss Support Programme:

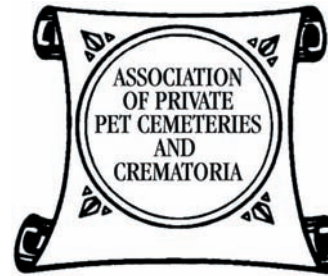
www.ease-animals.org.uk

Offers online support for anticipated pet loss.

More sources of support



This leaflet has been produced for the APPCC by Jane Matthews, author of *Losing a Pet*: coping with the death of your beloved animal. If you feel in need of more support in dealing with your bereavement copies of *Losing a Pet*, price £3.99, are available from all UK branches of Pets at Home, or by post, direct from the publishers call 01908 670080 or visit the website: **www.smallbooks.co.uk**



NATIONWIDE MEMBERSHIP

This leaflet is produced by the Association of Private Pet Cemeteries & Crematoria (APPCC)

Based in the UK, the APPCC is currently the only organisation in Europe setting standards for the cremation and burial of pets such that owners can understand the service being provided. All our members adhere to a strict code of practice to ensure that high professional standards are achieved and members provide a genuine, personal and reliable service that will offer peace of mind to the bereaved.

Handing your pet over for cremation is an act of trust. We strongly advise you to use, or to ensure your veterinary practice uses, an APPCC member.

To find your nearest facility or for help in choosing a memorial please visit www.appcc.org.uk or telephone our National Helpline +44 (0) 1252 844478



Coping with Pet Bereavement



NATIONWIDE MEMBERSHIP



The best of friends

Friend, companion, comfort – our pets can mean so much in our lives and many of us are unprepared for the extent of our grief when we lose them.

Rather than deny our feelings it is important to recognise what our pet has meant to us. Not only has their love for us been unconditional, they have given us a chance to love them back.

Our pets tolerate our moods and our bad days. They let us be ourselves and do not waver in the depth of their love.

That's a huge thing to lose and it is quite usual and normal to feel as deeply as we would at the loss of any dear friend or loved one.

Difficult feelings

We all experience loss differently; there are no rules about what you feel or how you should react. Besides feelings of sadness you may experience any or all of the following emotions:

Shock and denial: It's very normal to go through a period of numbness or disbelief, a feeling of being disconnected from everything and everyone, especially if your pet's death was unexpected.

Guilt: Perhaps you feel you should have done more or ought to have been able to prevent your pet's death in some way? Guilt is a very common emotion and yet you were almost certainly doing the best you could at the time.

Anger and blame: When things go wrong it's natural to look for someone or something to blame. Working through strong emotions like anger is an important part of healing but do make sure you find a safe outlet for your feelings.

Depression: We rarely experience grief 'in a straight line'. Rather, it can be like a roller coaster, leaving us feeling out of control. But if you find yourself, months later, feeling permanently heavy-hearted, and wondering what there is to get up for, you may need to seek professional help.

Grieving

Feelings are nature's way of enabling us to deal with loss and to heal from loss. Accept you will have good days and bad days, and remember that sooner or later – as with any bereavement – time will begin its healing process.

- Take time off from your normal routine. We're very good at insisting 'life must go on'. Taking time out is a way of acknowledging to yourself the depth of your loss.
- Make your healing your priority. That means putting your needs above other people's for a while.
- Treat yourself with the same love and compassion you would a friend. Be your own best friend right now.
- Try not to dwell on comments made by well-meaning friends and colleagues suggesting for example, that "it's only a pet" or "just get another one".



Putting your pet to sleep

Making the decision to put your pet to sleep is heartbreaking. However, by making the decision you are showing how much you love your pet, because you do not want the suffering to continue. It is the greatest final gift you can give your pet.

Children and bereavement

Children react to the death of a pet in many different ways, depending on their age and what else may be going on in their lives. If they are already struggling, perhaps with school or friendships, the loss of a pet's unconditional love and approval can trigger some powerful emotions. If it is their first experience of death, they may find it very confusing and have lots of questions.

Even though you may be grieving, it's important to give children the space and permission to talk about their feelings – and to answer their questions as honestly as possible without going into distressing details.

But there are no rights and wrongs when it comes to loss. Some children are not deeply involved with their pets, or may appear more curious than upset. Teenagers, especially, may struggle to show or share any emotion, but may still need understanding and reassurance from the adults around them.

Your choices

You may already have made the decision about whether your pet is to be buried or cremated. The Association of Private Pet Cemeteries & Crematoria (APPCC) offer a compassionate and professional service that can be helpful while you are grieving and they can talk you through which choice is best for you. If you rent your property or move frequently cremation gives you more choice about how you handle your pet's remains.

Whatever you opt for, do allow yourself the opportunity to commemorate your pet, celebrating the love, joy and friendship your pet brought to your life. Most pet crematoria are now able to offer a wide range of caskets and memorial plaques for you to choose from.

Another pet?

If you have another pet at home it could be grieving for the companion it has lost. It may need the company and friendship as much as you do. Remember you will not be replacing the lost pet, but extending your love to another pet who may need a loving, caring home.

