

Coping with the loss of your pet



**Dedicated to improving the health
of the nation's pets**



Companionship

The pets we keep are very special to us. There are many different ways that animals contribute to our lives. Pets can bring us immeasurable rewards in the form of companionship, protection, relaxation, exercise... to name but a few. They may be a link with events or people in our lives and the bond that we form with them may be very strong.

Euthanasia... a big decision

We are responsible for the animal during its lifetime, and we are also responsible during the time of illness and death. It is natural to feel guilty when considering euthanasia. Sometimes we may feel angry that the animal cannot be saved and often think... 'If only I had done... things could have been different'. It is important to discuss your concerns with your vet, who will be able to advise and guide you towards the correct decision. This should re-assure you that the decision you have made, whatever the reason for euthanasia, has been the most appropriate one.

Grief

Pets are usually considered to be part of our family or an integral part of our lives and we may mourn at their death just as if we have lost a human friend or member of the family. The depth of emotion felt is often unexpected, but when you consider the friendship that may have been lost, the feelings of grief are not surprising.



Each of us experiences the grieving process in a unique way. Often the first reaction is disbelief. It may be hard to accept that our animal is no longer with us. The house feels so empty and it is difficult to come to terms with the fact that your pet will not be coming back. The feelings of loss may be particularly deep if you have depended on your pet for emotional support. You may feel very sad and low for a while.

Sometimes the loneliness is magnified by a lack of understanding from others. Some people may lose confidence and feel anxious about other animals that are in their care. It helps to share your feelings with a friend, a member of the veterinary staff or someone else who has had a similar experience. It is helpful to realise that your reaction to losing your pet is a normal response and these emotions can be considered a tribute to what your pet has meant to you.

The future...

After a while you will feel more able to direct your energies towards the future. Some people will soon want to fill the gap left by the loss of their pet. Other people may not be ready to get another animal for some time and may feel as if they are betraying their dead pet by investing love in another one. This is a normal but transient feeling. Only you will be able to decide when you are ready to introduce a new animal into the household. We should understand that a new animal does not replace the pet that has been lost but brings into the home a new presence that fills the emptiness.



Helping children to cope

Losing a family pet may be one of the first deaths we experience as children. Children should be told the truth about their pet, and from someone they know. The death of the pet should be explained in honest, simple language that they will fully understand, avoiding ambiguous phrases like “put to sleep”. If possible the child should be warned if their pet is terminally ill or if euthanasia is going to be performed so that they can ask questions, prepare themselves for the loss and say their farewells.

If your child wishes to be present at the time of euthanasia or to see the pet’s body afterwards, then please discuss this with your vet who will be able to offer advice. It is important to allow time for discussion at this very sensitive time; be prepared to show your feelings and talk about the animal’s death.

Children may want to make some mark of remembrance to their dead pet.

If burial of the body is not possible they may want to bury a memento, such as their pet’s toy or lead, in a favourite spot and plant some bulbs or flowers. Some children may want to draw pictures or write poems.

This will help them grieve and come to terms with the loss.

Children who can grieve and then let go of their grief will be better prepared for future losses in their life.



I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT PETSABVERS

*please indicate

I enclose a cheque/postal order* (made payable to BSAVA Petsavers) donation of:

£5

£10

£30

£50

Other

Or please debit my Access/Visa/CAF Card* account

Expiry date:

with

£

Signed

Date

Gift Aid

I want the charity to treat the enclosed donation of £..... as a Gift Aid donation
 all donations that I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations

Please tick as appropriate

You must pay an amount of *Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the charity claims on your donations in the appropriate tax year (currently 28p for each £1 you give).*

Name

Address

Post Code

Daytime telephone no.

Email

For other ways to help Petsavers, please see overleaf.

We would like to keep you informed about the success of Petsavers work and our future fundraising activities.

Please tick this box if you do not wish to receive any further communication from Petsavers.

Please return to: Petsavers, BSAVA, Woodrow House, 1 Telford Way, Waterwells Business Park, Quedgeley, Gloucester GL2 2AB Registered Charity 1024811

Ways to help

Petsavers is a charity that raises funds for studies into the prevention, treatment and/or cure of illnesses and conditions affecting our pets, so that they can enjoy longer, fuller and healthier lives. You can help to support this vital work in any of the following ways:

- Making a donation in memory of your pet **by completing the form overleaf.**
- Making a long-standing commitment to Petsavers by making a donation on a regular basis through a standing order.
- Acting as a volunteer or ambassador to support Petsavers fundraising activities.
- Fundraising for Petsavers either by taking part in an existing event or organising your own fundraising activities, with the support of Petsavers.
- Purchasing and/or selling Petsavers Christmas cards.
- Nominating Petsavers as a beneficiary in your will.

If you would like to receive further information on any of the above ways of supporting Petsavers, then please tick the relevant box[es], complete your name and address overleaf and return this form to the address printed overleaf.

Helpful books

Goodbye, Dear Friend

by Virginia Ironside.

Robson Books ISBN: 1861050313

Death of an Animal Friend

Society for Companion Animal Studies.

Blue Cross, Shilton Road, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4PF

ISBN: 0951545329

Absent Friend

by Martyn and Laura Lee.

Ringpress Books ISBN: 1850540896

Pet Bereavement Support Service

Telephone: **0800 0966606**

Offers local help and a sympathetic ear for recently bereaved pet owners. It is jointly run by The Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS) and the Blue Cross.

Initial call free of charge.

Petsavers

This leaflet is published by Petsavers, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association's own charity. Petsavers also produce a leaflet 'How you can help Petsavers' and a regular News Bulletin.

For further information on how you can support the work of Petsavers please complete and return the attached form.



The British Small Animal Veterinary Association supports Petsavers with its administration costs enabling all donations to benefit pets.

Petsavers' studies never use experimental animals and Petsavers does not support any work that involves them.

Discoveries resulting from Petsavers' work are quickly passed on to veterinary surgeons in practice, so pets everywhere benefit.



Petsavers

Dedicated to improving the health of the nation's pets

A division of the

British Small Animal Veterinary Association

Registered Charity 1024811 Company No. 2837793

Registered office: Woodrow House, 1 Telford Way,
Waterwells Business Park, Quedgeley, Gloucester GL2 2AB

Tel: 01452 726723 Email: info@petsavers.org.uk

Website: www.petsavers.org.uk

Copyright © 2009 BSAVA