COPING WITH THE DEATH OF A PET

After the death of a pet...

We know how much pets mean to most people. People love their pets and consider them members of their family. Caregivers often celebrate their pets' birthdays, confide in their animals and carry pictures of them in their wallets. So when a beloved pet dies, it's not unusual to feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your sorrow.

Animals provide companionship, acceptance, emotional support, and unconditional love. If you understand and accept this bond between humans and animals, you've already taken the first step toward coping with pet loss: knowing that it is okay to grieve when your pet dies.

The loss of a pet may be a child's first experience with death. The child may blame themselves, their parents, or the veterinarian for not saving the pet. And they may feel guilty, depressed, and frightened that others they love may be taken from them.

Trying to protect your child by saying the pet ran away could cause your child to expect the pet's return and feel betrayed after discovering the truth. Expressing your own grief may reassure your child that sadness is ok and help them work through their feelings.

Surviving pets may whimper, refuse to eat or drink, and suffer lethargy, especially if they had a close bond with the deceased pet. Even if they were not the best of friends, the changing circumstances and your emotional state may distress them. (However, if your remaining pets continue to act out of sorts, there could be a medical problem that requires your veterinarian's attention.)

Give surviving pets lots of TLC and try to maintain a normal routine. It's good for them and for you.

Getting another pet

Rushing into this decision isn't fair to you or your new pet. Each animal has their own unique personality and a new animal cannot replace the one you lost. You'll know when the time is right to adopt a new pet after giving yourself time to grieve, considering whether you're ready, and paying close attention to your feelings.

When you're ready, remember that your local animal shelter or rescue is a great place to find your next special friend.
Here are a few suggestions to help you cope

- Acknowledge your grief and give yourself permission to express it.
- Don't hesitate to reach out to others who can lend a sympathetic ear. Do a little research online and you'll find hundreds of resources and support groups that may be helpful to you.
- Write about your feelings, either in a journal or a poem, essay, or short story.
- Call your veterinarian or local humane society to see whether they offer a pet-loss support group or hotline, or can refer you to one.
- Prepare a memorial for your pet.

WANT TO MEMORIALIZE YOUR PET?
HSFORBC OFFERS BRICKS THAT WILL BE PROUDLY DISPLAYED IN FRONT OF OUR SHELTER.
FOR PICTURES OF BRICKS AND MORE INFORMATION…
http://boonecountyhumane.org/brick-fundraiser.html

RESOURCES

AMERICAN VET MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
https://www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/pet-loss.aspx

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF UNITED STATES
http://m.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/coping_with_pet_death.html

THE HELP GUIDE
https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-losing-a-pet.htm

ASPCA – END OF LIFE CARE
https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/end-life-care