

About the Helpline

The CARE Pet Loss Helpline for Companion Animal Related Emotions was developed to provide support to people experiencing the actual or anticipated loss of their cherished companion animal. Since its beginning in 1997, Helpline volunteers have assisted hundreds of grieving callers from all over the country.

The Helpline is staffed by veterinary students who understand the importance of the bond you share with your animal friend. These students have received training from a licensed social worker and undergo continuous supervision. However, the Helpline is not staffed by licensed mental health professionals.

Volunteers are unable to provide professional mental health assistance and cannot provide information about your animal's medical condition. You may be advised to contact a professional in your area.

Volunteers answer the phone personally on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday evenings between 7 and 9 p.m. Central Standard Time. You may call and leave a message any time. Your call will be returned during our regular business hours. This service is free and confidential.

The Helpline gratefully acknowledges the contributions of donors and the continued support from the Companion Animal Memorial Fund at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine. For information on memorial donations, visit www.vetmed.illinois.edu/advancement or call (217) 333-2761.

How to contact us

(877) 394-2273 toll free
(217) 244-2273 local
7 p.m. – 9 p.m. CST
Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday

24-Hour voice mail
Calls will be returned the next shift.

griefhelp@vetmed.illinois.edu

www.vetmed.illinois.edu/CARE/



CARE Pet Loss Helpline
University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine
3505 VMBSB, 2001 South Lincoln Avenue
Urbana, IL 61802

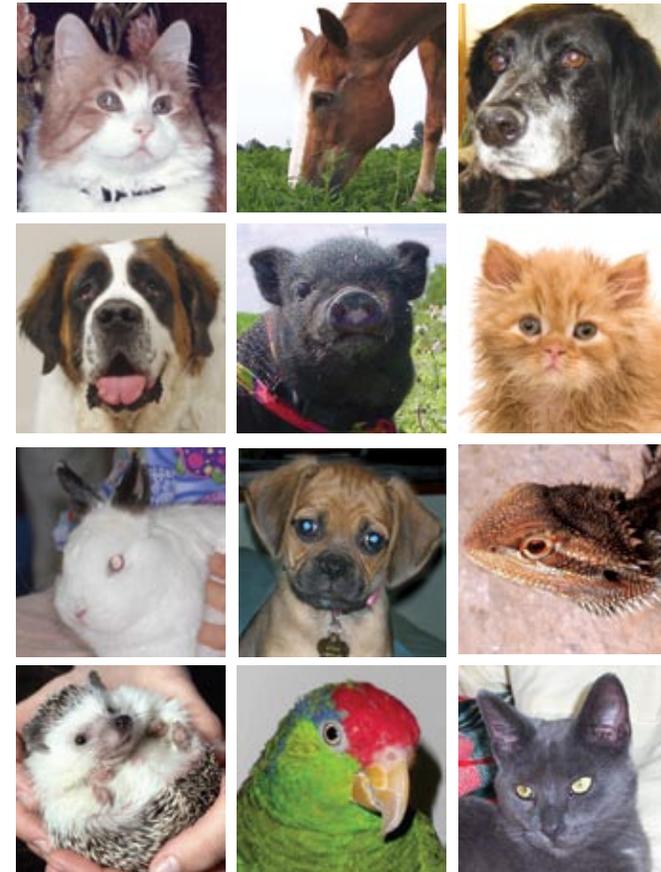
CARE

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*Compassionate support for people
grieving the loss of a companion animal*



CARE *Pet Loss Helpline*

The death of your companion animal may be one of the most significant losses of your life. With this loss often comes substantial grief and its emotional and physical manifestations. You may experience sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, helplessness, crying, fatigue, or changes in appetite and sleep patterns. It is important to know that these feelings are normal, and that grieving is a necessary part of the healing process.

Whether you find yourself struggling with your feelings of grief, or you would simply like a compassionate, understanding person to talk to, please call the CARE Pet Loss Helpline. The Helpline can also provide you with specific information on grieving, euthanasia, children and pet loss, and meaningful ways to memorialize your beloved animal friend.



"I just wanted to say thanks for being there and being so helpful to me in a time of need. Candy was a wonderful companion for so long. I appreciate your compassion. The info packet has helped greatly too."

Robin from Illinois

What helps?

Grieving is the natural way that your mind and body adjust to a loss and heal your emotional wounds. We strongly encourage you to allow yourself to grieve in a way that gives you the most comfort. Allowing yourself to feel the sadness, anger, anguish, and loss will aid the healing process. Conversely, repressing your feelings may actually prolong your sadness and time for recovery. During this time, you may need the emotional support of family, friends, your veterinarian, and perhaps a grief counselor.

For a state-by-state list of pet loss support groups, grief counselors, cemeteries, and crematoriums, you can visit www.pet-loss.net.

A helpful book is *When Your Pet Dies* by Alan Wolfelt (www.centerforloss.com).

Many people find it helpful to memorialize their cherished companion animal. Here are some ideas:

- Frame a photograph of your pet
- Keep a clipping of hair, or feathers, or braid of mane
- Make a clay paw print or hoof print (www.veterinarywisdom.com)
- Make a photo album, scrapbook, or DVD
- Keep belongings (a collar, tags, toys, etc.) in a memory box
- Select a special urn for your pet's cremated remains
- Put some ashes or hair into cremation jewelry
- Hold a burial or memorial ceremony
- Put up a plaque or marker
- Plant a tree or flowers to honor your pet
- Volunteer time for a special cause in your pet's memory
- Make a donation in your pet's name
- Have a painting or sculpture created
- Keep the memories of your pet in your heart always

Children grieve, too

The loss of a pet can be traumatic for children. There are many things parents can do to help children learn to cope with the painful reality of death.

- Being open and honest with children can aid in their healing.
- Giving children the chance to say good-bye, either before or after the death, can help them accept reality.
- If your pet was, or is going to be, euthanized, avoid using the phrase "put to sleep" so that children do not misconstrue that they themselves could go to sleep and not wake up. Instead you might say "We're helping Fluffy to die peacefully because we love her very much and don't want her to suffer."
- It's okay to be sad – tears are a natural expression of love. The hurt won't last forever. Help children find ways to remember their special companion.



There are many good children's books on pet loss, including:

When a Pet Dies by Fred Rogers

Lifetimes by Brian Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst

The Accident by Carol Carrick

I'll Always Love You by Hans Wilhelm

A helpful book for parents is *Children and Pet Loss: A Guide for Helping* by Marty Tousley (www.griefhealing.com).



"What we have enjoyed we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."

Helen Keller