

# Coping with the LOSS OF A PET?

We're here to listen



**PET BEREAVEMENT  
SUPPORT SERVICE**



# Grieving for a pet

Grieving for the loss of a pet, whether through death or enforced separation, can be a very sad and difficult experience. Life, once filled with the love and friendship of a pet, may suddenly seem very empty.

Feelings of despair, loneliness and even depression can be overwhelming. There may also be a strong sense of guilt and self-doubt, particularly when a decision has been taken to euthanase or rehome a pet.

These feelings are normal and a testimony to the special bond between people and their pets. Unfortunately, not everyone understands this grief, and it can be a very lonely experience.





## Supporting pet owners

### Moving to a new home

**“I’ve lost my beloved dog after many years of friendship and I’m heartbroken”**

With an ongoing health problem, which often meant frequent treatment in hospital, Jim found it increasingly difficult to manage on his own at home.

He made the painful decision to move in with a relative which meant giving up his beloved dog, Barnie. The move and the loss of Barnie left Jim feeling distraught and lonely. Jim contacted the Pet Bereavement Support Service and spoke to someone on the support line who gave him all the time he needed to talk about his life with Barnie, the companionship they shared, the decisions he had to make, and how he was left feeling. In time, and with support, Jim was able to accept and come to terms with his loss.



## **Making a decision and saying goodbye**

**“I just need to tell someone how utterly guilty and devastated I feel”**

Catherine’s cat, Molly, was diagnosed with a tumour. Catherine knew at some stage she would need to make a decision to ensure that Molly did not experience pain or unnecessary suffering. Catherine wasn’t sure when she needed to make that decision and what to expect during euthanasia. Whenever she thought about it she felt physically ill, guilty and anxious. As well as speaking to her vet, Catherine emailed the Pet Bereavement Support Service and shared her anxieties with a volunteer who helped Catherine prepare for the end of Molly’s life and consider some options for Molly’s body after her death.

Catherine felt stronger knowing what to expect and when the time came to part with Molly she was able to be with her at the end of her life.

## Parting with a pet

**“We never expected to react as badly as we have. Is this overwhelming sadness normal?”**

Janie’s two children had a pony and two rabbits. Her husband had been unemployed for some time and this had put a considerable strain on their relationship and finances. They had made the decision to separate and rehome the animals as they could no longer afford to look after them.

The family were heartbroken at having to part with their pets. Janie and the children contacted the support line at the Pet Bereavement Support Service and spent time talking through their anger, sadness and the pain of parting with their pets. As well as contacting the support line the family were given details of other organisations that could help them through their traumatic time.



## Support line

Sometimes it helps to share feelings with someone who knows from personal experience how distressing the loss of a pet can be, and who will listen with understanding and compassion.

The Pet Bereavement Support Service is a confidential telephone and email support line service that offers emotional support and information for anyone experiencing the loss of a pet.

**To make contact call:**

**0800 096 6606**

**The support line is open everyday  
from 8.30am – 8.30pm.**

(Some mobile networks may charge)

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**email support**

**[pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk](mailto:pbssmail@bluecross.org.uk)**

**The email support line service provides support for people who prefer to write about how they are feeling.**

## Pet MEMORIAL

You may wish to remember a pet in a special and lasting way with a photograph or by writing a few words or a poem.

**Visit: [www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)**

## About the **PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SERVICE**

The **Pet Bereavement Support Service** is run by Blue Cross and, since its launch in 1994, it has helped thousands of pet owners of all ages and from all walks of life.

Volunteers respond to calls and emails on the support line everyday. They are volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. All have experienced the loss of a pet and have completed a training course. They offer a “listening ear” and give time, patience and encouragement to pet owners as they work through their loss.

The **Pet Bereavement Support Service** offers practical information on pet loss for friends, family members and others who have contact with pet owners.



# Helpful books and reading

## Absent Friend

By Laura and Martyn Lee.  
Published by Hensto.

## Goodbye, Dear Friend

By Virginia Ironside.  
Published by Robson.

## Time to say goodbye

Pet care leaflets available to download at  
[www.bluecross.org.uk](http://www.bluecross.org.uk)

## Share your experience

If you have contacted us for support and would like to share your experience with others, we would love to hear from you.



The charity dedicated to helping sick, injured and homeless pets since 1897.



The Pet Bereavement Support Service is a member of The Helplines Standard and British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

## For further copies of this leaflet, please contact:

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