Edenhills xo
Pet Cremation

Pet Loss and Grief

Support for you and your family

We're here to support you in any way we can. Because we've been through it too.

The Edenhills story began in 1984, with our animal-loving family dedicated to offering personal and affordable pet cremation and funeral services.

We understand how difficult it is to say goodbye to a beloved family member, and the importance of honouring their memory.

Our team is a family of animal lovers who are ready to support you through your grief, whenever and wherever you may need us.

Your Edenhills Family

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Pet parents in grief: To mourn and heal

When someone we love dies, it leaves a feeling of loss and emptiness in our lives. As beloved family members, saying goodbye to a pet can be devastating.

By physically expressing your grief, you will help move your bereaved heart on a journey through grief to grief reconciliation.

What can I do?

It may take weeks or months to acknowledge the full reality of your pet's loss. Everyone grieves in their own way and in their own time, so it's important to focus on what feels right for you.

By kind to yourself as you prepare for the 'new normal' of a life without your beloved pet. Though it is sad and difficult to experience the emotions around your loss during this time, it's an important part of the grieving process.

Treasure your memories

Our memories allow our pets to live on in our hearts. When you are ready, take some time to look at past photos or write your pet a letter or poem to commemorate your time together.

Find yourself

Part of your self-identity might come from being a pet parent, or having people associate you with your pet. You may be the person who walked their Staffy around the neighbourhood, or the friend whose cat loved to snuggle onto laps. Adjusting to this change is a central part of mourning.

Asking for support

Grief isn't something you can just 'get over.' It's something you need to get through, which is why the support of family and friends is so important. Talking with others who have recently lost a pet is also helpful.

The sound of silence

The silence in your home after the loss of a pet can be deafeningly loud. Being aware of the 'presence of their absence' will help prepare you for their loss and the flood of emotions it brings.

Your special bond

Above all, you and your pet shared a special bond, one that others might find difficult to understand.

Some well-meaning friends or family members might say 'he was just a dog' or 'she was just a cat' without understanding the special bond you shared. Know that your grief is normal and the bond you and your pet shared deserves to be mourned.

Children in grief: Understanding their journey

Helping your child to grieve

As an adult, it's important to let your child to 'lead' the journey through the grieving process. Children are naturally inclined to show their feelings, and will teach you what they need to mourn.

Children will mourn in doses and have bursts of sadness. They will mourn, then play, mourn some more and then play again. They will let you know when they are ready to talk, cry or need a hug. This is a healthy way for young ones to move themselves from grief to reconciliation.

Your role is to give them the space they need to grieve in their own way. Try to model your grieving behaviour in a way that lets children follow your lead and feel safe and comfortable in expressing their own feelings.

Saying goodbye, together

Saying goodbye to a pet friend may often be a child's first experience of death.

They will want to be given a chance to remember their pet and relive the life they shared. This process will be an integral part of their grief journey.

Allow your child to see when you cry and are grieving so they know it's okay to feel sad. To help honour your pet's memory together, you could set up a 'tribute table' in your home to display all the items that remind you of your pet, such as photos and toys. Your child can also add their own pictures or stories to the table.

Some pet owners also take comfort from arranging a memorial service to pay tribute to their pet. Let your child help you decide on readings, poems, letters or music to play at the service.

You can also create a personalised marker to your pet in your backyard, or work on a scrapbook, journal or photograph album together. As a family, you may also like to donate to a local animal shelter in memory of your pet.

Saying the right words

In talking to a child about the death of their pet, it is important to use the correct terminology to describe what has happened.

Using words like 'death', 'dead' and 'died' is more helpful to children than using words like 'sleeping', 'gone to the farm' or 'adopted by another family.' Pretending will only create confusion and unresolved feelings of grief for your child

The emotions of euthanasia

Making the decision to euthanise your pet is enormously difficult. Your veterinarian will be there to answer your questions and support you through this decision.

At this time, it is important to remember that you are the pet parent and know them better than anyone. You are intuitively aware of your pet's emotions and feelings, which you will need to consider during this emotional decision-making time.

If you have already decided to have your pet euthanised, trust that you have made the right decision with the information you have and your pet's best interests at heart. There is no right or wrong choice, only a loving choice.

Making sense of your emotions

Whilst it may seem unbearably hard to stay with your pet during the euthanasia procedure, you will have the peace of mind to know your pet had the comfort of your presence during their final moments.

You will have a lot of emotions at this time. Before making your decision, it may be helpful to first speak to your vet about the euthanasia process. You can also receive other helpful information through:

- A pet hospice group to assist with pain management for your pet at home
- Friends who understand the importance of your pet
- Counsellors specialising in end-of-life pet care
- Pet loss support groups

Managing the guilt

Pet parents who are placed in the position of making a life-or-death decision for their pets often refer to their plight as having to 'play God.'

As a pet parent, knowing your pet is suffering, whether physically or mentally, will be part of your decision-making process when discussing euthanasia. Considering the following factors can be a helpful start:

- When my pet stops enjoying treats
- When my pet stops eating
- When my pet can no longer find their litter box
- When my pet can no longer find the door

The decision to euthanise will never be an easy one. Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for support during this time, and be kind to yourself.

A heartfelt choice

Making this decision for your pet will involve others who have been part of your pet's life, such as family members, friends, other pets and your vet. Understanding everyone's emotional connection to the relationship they shared with your pet will also help to guide you before, during and after euthanasia.

It's also important to remember everyone has their own viewpoints. Try not to be overwhelmed by the opinions of others and stick to your decision – after all, you know your pet better than anyone.

This is a good time to give everyone the opportunity to farewell your pet with final hugs or pats, or to give your pet a special treat or toy to create a truly meaningful goodbye.

Pets in grief: Helping you help them

Animals experience feelings of loss just like humans do, and can also express their loss in a variety of different ways.

As a pet parent, it's important to be aware of your pet's feelings during this time, and help them mourn the loss of their companion.

My other pet's emotions

Your pet may visibly show signs of mourning, such as:

- Loss of appetite, restless sleep or wandering aimlessly
- Being quieter than normal in their communication (barking or miaowing)
- Being more vocal than normal in their communication (barking or miaowing)
- Constant searching for their pet friend
- Demanding more attention than normal
- Having no desire to be social

Your other pets should also be given the opportunity to say goodbye to their pet friend. It is distressing to a pet to see a member of the household leave and never return. If it is not possible to have the remaining pets at home to say goodbye, take a snippet of a lock of fur so that they will have something to smell to help them understand their pet friend has died.

Some possible behaviours your other pets may show during this time include:

- Sniffing the deceased body to confirm the death
- Laying beside your deceased pet
- Trying to 'bury' the deceased pet by moving dirt with their nose or by pulling a blanket over the body
- Howling or whimpering
- Pawing at the body as if trying to wake them up
- Bringing a favourite toy over to the deceased pet to play
- It may also be possible for your pet to show no signs at all

Their grief journey

There are some things you can do to help your pet during this time, which can also help you through your grief, too. These include:

- Keeping your pet's routine the same
- Giving your pet extra care and attention
- Giving your pet something with your deceased pet's scent on it for comfort
- Taking your pet on a favourite outing, such as a car ride
- Taking longer walks together, so your pet won't have to be alone
- Allowing your pet to sleep in areas that he or she would not have slept in the past, such as the deceased pet's chair or bed
- Talking to your pet about their lost friend – tell them how you are grieving too, and give them 'permission' to grieve as well
- If the deceased pet was the 'alpha' leader of the house, know the remaining pets will now have to re-establish order in the home

You and your pet are both grieving the loss of a friend. Allow yourself time and patience to pay tribute to their memory and mourn the special bond that has gone.

Memorialisation: To honour and pay tribute

There is no right or wrong way to memorialise your beloved pet. What you and your family decide to do to pay tribute to your beloved pet has to be right for you.

The first part of your decision is a practical one: cremation or burial? Many factors will play a part in your decision, such as living arrangements, opinions of friends and family, religion, costs, or council regulations. Your future living situation may factor into your decision, too.

Once you have made the final arrangements, you also have a number of options available to honour your pet's memory. These include:

- Urns (wooden, ceramic or metal)
- Memorial jewellery
- Memorial glass domes
- Teddy bears
- Burial garden plaques
- Engraved stones

Preparing for the loss of your pet

After euthanasia, there are some questions to consider that you can start planning for in advance.

Do I want to have my beloved pet cremated privately, or buried?

Most people choose to have their pet cremated, unless they have the option for a burial at home, or at a cemetery specifically for pets. If you are choosing to bury your pet on your property, be sure to check any local regulations and by-laws first.

If I choose to cremate my pet, will their ashes be returned to me?

When a pet is cremated, you can choose to have their remains (ashes) returned to you or not. If you choose to have your pet's ashes returned, you can also choose the vessel in which they are placed. Your veterinarian may talk to you about the options available to you.

What is the difference between private and communual cremation?

A private cremation is where only one pet is placed in each crematory chamber and cremated, with the cremated remains (ashes) then returned to the family.

What is a communal cremation?

In a communal cremation, pets are placed into the crematorium together and cremated. With a communal cremation, cremated remains are not returned to the family.

Can I organise a keepsake?

If you think you may want a keepsake that requires cremated remains (ashes), such as a piece of jewellery, a glass bead or another memorial item, a private cremation is ideal.

Holding a goodbye service

You may wish to have one last time to be with your pet after they pass. This allows you to see your pet at peace, a time for your children to pay tribute by bringing in items special for your pet, and a time to begin your grief journey with a heartfelt goodbye.

Family members, friends and other pets may want to share a final goodbye with your pet too. After all, pets touch the lives of so many people during their time with us. Allow those around you the opportunity to come together, pay their respects and support each other. This can be done through:

- Special readings
- Rituals you and your pet did to say 'I love you'
- A candle lighting tribute
- Readings of special remembrance poems
- Sharing photos and videos of your pet and family together

What's right for you

How you choose to memorialise your pet is up to you. Rituals, ceremonies and memorial pieces are unique to every individual and have special meaning to the relationship they shared with their pet. Friends or family might not understand your need to create a lasting memorial, but it's your decision to help you grieve, and one you should never be ashamed to make.

Grief Resources and Support

Dealing with the loss of your beloved pet isn't something you have to go through alone. There is always support available if you need it. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, everyone grieves in their own way.

Support Services Available

24/7 Pet Loss Support Line – 1300 431 450

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Griefline – 1300 845 745

Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

Melbourne
(03) 5367 0556 care@edenhills.com.au
42 School Lane, Maddingley VIC 3340

Scoresby
(03) 8288 1808 service@edenhills.com.au
Unit C1 Scoresby Industrial Park,
5 Janine Street, Scoresby VIC 3179

Albury/Wodonga
(03) 4310 0135 country@edenhills.com.au
492 Chiltern Road, Barnawartha VIC 3688

Adelaide
(08) 8186 6362 support@edenhills.com.au
12 Kitawah Street, Lonsdale SA 5160

Canberra
(02) 5134 5970 canberra@edenhills.com.au
2/1 Alumina Street, Beard ACT 2620

edenhills.com.au

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