

About the Tufts University Pet Loss Support Hotline...

Since its inception in 1996, the Tufts Pet Loss Support Hotline has received over 1000 phone calls from people just like you: people grieving over the loss of their beloved friend and cherished family member.

The Hotline was established by a group of caring veterinary students in response to the perceived need for a community-based resource through which people could safely grieve the past or impending separation from a pet. To that end, an effort was launched to establish the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine Pet Loss Support Hotline.

The Hotline is run solely by our own veterinary students. These student volunteers participate in an all-day training session with a licensed therapist. In addition, regular staff meetings and on-going trainings are held.

Callers are assured the assistance of a caring, supportive, respectful, non-judgmental person when they contact our Pet Loss Support Hotline. Our staff is also available to provide recommended reading material, help you think through any decision you may be facing concerning the death of your pet, and to help you discuss your animal's death/loss with your children and friends. Please note: As students, we cannot provide any medical advice regarding your pet's current or past medical conditions.

Our Mission...

The Tufts Pet Loss Support Hotline seeks to serve the community-at-large by providing both a resource for people grieving the loss of a pet, and an opportunity for our veterinary students to acquire the skills needed for pet loss and grief counseling.

Donations...

We are supported primarily by private donations. It is the financial support of individuals, veterinary practices, private foundations, and pet-related industries that make the Pet Loss Support Hotline possible. Please see our website for more information (www.tufts.edu/vet/petloss).

Tufts University Pet Loss Support Hotline

To have loved and lost...

The loss of a pet can have a significant impact on you and your family. Companion animals give us a type of support, love, and loyalty that can be hard to find elsewhere. Losing a family pet can be one of the most difficult times in your life.

Loss of a pet, whether due to death, disappearance, or inability to keep it, is the loss of a special and unique part of your life. Knowing that there will be no replacement causes pain and grief. Whether your pet is a cat, dog, ferret, rabbit, horse, bird, fish, or any other species of animal that shares our hearts and lives, the staff at the Pet Loss Support Hotline understands the significance of your loss.

If you are anticipating the loss of a pet or want to talk with someone about your thoughts and feelings regarding a pet that has died, please give us a call. The Pet Loss Support Hotline can help you think through difficult decisions and explore your feelings.

Questions you may have...

- When is it time to say goodbye?
- Are my feelings of grief normal?
- Why am I still sad about a pet I lost long ago?
- How can I help my grieving child?
- How do I make arrangements for the remains of my pet?
- Should I get a new pet? If so, when?

How to reach us...



Tufts University
School of Veterinary Medicine
Pet Loss Support Hotline
200 Westboro Road
North Grafton, MA 01536

508-839-7966

www.tufts.edu/vet/petloss

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Tufts University Pet Loss Support Hotline

508-839-7966



6PM - 9PM EST

Monday - Friday

24-Hour Voice Mail

Calls will be returned during the next shift.

For latest information on hours and services, please visit us at our website

www.tufts.edu/vet/petloss

The death of a beloved pet...

The bond we form with our pets is unique and personal and so is the grief we feel when they die. All of us experience and cope with loss just a little differently. We can experience a wide range of emotional and physical states: shock, sorrow, anger, fatigue, guilt, insomnia, loss of appetite, and loneliness. Others may feel simply empty. All of these things are normal.

What's important is that you allow yourself to grieve as much or as little as you need and for as long as you need.

Talk with others. Share your precious memories. Seek support from family, friends, and caring people. Finally, the day will come when thoughts of your beloved pet will only bring you smiles.



*"...Remember not my
fight of breath,
Remember not the strife.
Please do not dwell
upon my death,
But celebrate my life."*

From "Request from the
Rainbow Bird" by
Constance Jenkins

But suppose my pet didn't die...

The Pet Loss Support Hotline is available not only for people facing decisions regarding euthanasia and death of their pet. Any situation where you find yourself separated from your pet can be a devastating one. The Hotline can be a resource for those who are forced to give up their companion animal for any number of reasons: relocation, allergies, financial constraints, etc. Occasionally, animals stray from their home, never to return to their original family. What makes these experiences so sad are the lingering questions and lack of closure. You are left wondering:

- Is my pet safe?
- Is someone caring for my pet?
- Will my pet ever return to me?
- Did I do the right thing?

Staff at the Hotline can help you work through these and many other unanswered questions.

When hope is not enough...

Although our hope would be for our animal companions to live a long, healthy life and die curled up in a peaceful sleep, illness or injury may instead cut short the time you always expected to have together. Often we are faced with the heart-breaking decision of choosing the time, place, and method of our pet's death when it becomes clear that they are suffering or when other needs predominate. Choosing to end the life of your pet can be one of the most difficult things you will ever have to do. Thinking about saying goodbye and the subsequent loss is sometimes so painful that you are unable to make any decision at all.



“What I would like to feel that, having once had me in the family, now she cannot live without a dog.”

The Last Will and Testament of an Extremely Distinguished Dog
by Eugene O'Neill

You don't have to figure it all out on your own. Get help from your veterinarian, pet loss counselors, and others who have gone through similar experiences. There are no right answers: just do what feels right for you.

Call us at: 508-839-7966 • 6-9PM EST • Mon-Fri • 24-Hour Voice Mail
or visit our website: www.tufts.edu/vet/petloss

How do I tell my children?

Children grieve very differently than adults. A child's perception of death varies as a function of age, level of maturity, and personal experience. Understanding the level of emotional and cognitive development that your child possesses will better enable you to explain what it means when a pet dies or leaves home for whatever reason. Using statements such as "put to sleep" or "passed on" have very different meanings for children and we suggest that you avoid these confusing euphemisms.

To help your child understand the permanence of death and the grief involved with the loss, keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Always be honest with your child.
- Encourage your child to talk about his/her feelings.
- Allow yourself to be honest with your own feelings.
- Alert your child's teacher or daycare provider as to the recent family sadness.
- Read a book with your child that addresses pet loss.
- Allow your child to grieve with the family. Show them, by example, that it is appropriate to be sad and cry.
- Emphasize the fact that nobody is to blame for the death/loss of your pet. Children tend to think in concrete terms and often wonder if they are somehow responsible.
- If possible, give children an opportunity to say goodbye. This will allow for a sense of closure.



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Do animals grieve?

We may never know if animals feel the loss of other animals the same way we do. However, it is clear by their actions that they do respond to the absence of their companions. You may see changes in their eating and sleeping habits, they might appear depressed, or may constantly search for their missing friend. Many will need time and extra attention from loving owners to adjust to their new life. While we may not know the depth of their grief, we can help them get through the experience as they also help us.



Donations Support the Operation of the Pet Loss Support Hotline. Thank you for your support.

The enclosed gift of \$_____ is given in memory of:

Pet's Name	Species
Pet Owner's Name	City
Address	State
Zip	Phone
Donor's Name	City
Address	State
Zip	Phone

My company has a matching gift program.
Company Name _____

Please send information about including the
Pet Loss Support Hotline in my will or estate plan.

Please make checks payable to: Trustees of Tufts University
Memo: For Pet Loss Support Hotline

Please send to: Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine
Pet Loss Support Hotline
200 Westboro Road, North Grafton, MA 01536

