

When The Family Pet Dies...

Pets are often considered to be family members. For an adult the loss of a pet may be just part of the process, as emotional as it still remains. Still, there are other members of the family that pet loss can be hard for. Many kids' first encounter with death is that of their pet's and know that when many pets live together, they regard each other as family, and would be greatly affected by the death of one.

Since many children first experience death with pets, it is very important to handle this situation carefully. Many people don't remember how traumatic and confusing death was the first time they had to deal with it.

Be very patient especially with younger kids when they go back to the subject repeatedly. Be free with your hugs and support. Be honest when you discuss death and grief with them. Side stepping the issue won't help at all, and children have great instincts, they know when something isn't being said. You shouldn't say things like "God took your dog", or that their pet was put to sleep.

In case you have other pets, observe for any changes in their behaviour. Pets can form very strong family/pack bonds with one another. Your remaining pets might be restless and anxious. Some pets that are usually energetic may choose to sleep for long periods of time, and eating habits become finicky.

Eating and sleeping habits may dramatically change. If you had several dogs and the pet that died was the dominant male/female, there will probably be scuffles and some fights as the remaining dogs try to figure out the new hierarchy. This is quite natural, and you should avoid interfering as much as possible. Try to keep things as normal as possible, and in time they will go back to their old ways. Your pets just need time.

About the Author

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