



PREPARING FOR PET LOSS

This Support Sheet is written for those who anticipate the death of a much-loved pet because of old age, terminal illness or any other reason. Knowing that a pet will inevitably depart is a difficult road to travel, and we hope that these pointers will help to guide you along the way.

To assist you through the stresses and strains of this, you might want to focus on what your pet needs and what you can do practically. But it's important to remain realistic about what is possible and what you can and can't do - after all, you're probably also coping with the usual everyday aspects of life.

A good start on this journey is to stay in close contact with your vet and the vet staff so that you can talk about things openly and honestly. This will allow you to ask about the things that worry you, and means you can be best informed about your pet's condition and about what you can do to keep him or her comfortable. For example, you could find out:

-  What to expect as the condition progresses
-  Behavioural changes and symptoms to look out for, and what to do about them
-  When to seek urgent medical care
-  How to manage your pet's possible pain (see the EASE article on 'Spotting the signs of pain in cats and dogs' if relevant)

You may also want to discuss with your vet the options for if and when euthanasia is needed. A comprehensive view of this is covered in our Support Sheet on 'Coping with pet euthanasia', which includes aspects such as timing, practical issues, grief and how to think about and talk about the many considerations within this difficult decision.

The anticipation of losing a beloved friend often brings emotional turmoil and a number of concerns and worries. It can help to talk through what is on your mind and what you're feeling to someone who understands - this may be a close friend or relation, or perhaps a pet bereavement counsellor or befriender (see, for example, the links on the EASE website).

Our Support Sheet entitled 'A practical guide to after-death services' will help you plan the arrangements for after your pet has died, so that you don't feel pressured into last-minute decisions. Although these things are difficult to face and think about, such considerations and forward planning can offer you easement.

This opportunity with your pet, whilst being difficult in many ways, can also offer you a special closeness between you both. Spending time on rich and intimate processes such as those described in the EASE writing 'The power of gratitude' will help to bring well-being and comfort to you and your pet.

Knowing that you are doing your best for your pet in the circumstances will enable you to focus more clearly on these days or weeks you can still share together, and in times ahead you will have these special memories to cherish and bring you comfort.



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