

LOVE REMAINS

NORTH TEXAS · EST. 2025

LOVE REMAINS PET AFTERCARE & CREMATION

Honouring the Bond. Supporting Your Grief.

A Pet Loss Support Guide

Honouring the love that never leaves.

A NOTE FOR YOU

Your Grief is Real

If you are reading this, you are likely facing the loss of a pet you loved deeply. Or you may be preparing for a goodbye you know is coming. Either way, what you are feeling matters.

The bond between a person and their animal is not lesser than any other love. Research confirms what you already know: losing a pet can cause grief as intense as losing a close family member. A 2026 study from Maynooth University found that for nearly one in five people, the death of a pet was the most devastating loss they had ever experienced.

And yet, the world often does not make room for this kind of grief. Friends may not understand. Work does not pause. There are few rituals, few traditions, and very little structure to lean on. Researchers call this disenfranchised grief: real pain that society does not fully acknowledge.

This guide was created for you. Not to tell you how to grieve, but to offer information, ideas, and permission to honour your pet in whatever way feels right. There is no timeline. There is no wrong way. Take what helps. Leave the rest.

IN THIS GUIDE

05 Understanding Pet Loss Grief
08 If Goodbye Is Coming Soon
09 The First 24 Hours
10 Aftercare: Caring for the Body
12 Keepsakes and Memorial Items
14 Creative Ways to Remember
16 Helping Children Through Loss
18 Taking Care of Yourself
21 Resources and Support
22 What Compassionate Aftercare Can Look Like

“Grief is the price we pay for love.”

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

A NOTE TO YOU

Why I Started Love Remains

I spent much of my nursing career close to the end of life, sitting with people and their families through the part most of us would rather look away from. I saw how deeply the final hours can shape the memories a family carries forward. The smallest details mattered. A gentle touch, an unhurried presence, and the feeling that the person they loved was treated with dignity could stay with them for years.

That understanding became deeply personal to me through Ceeto, my dog. When the father of my eldest son died, Ceeto was the one steady and familiar presence I could lean on. He carried me through one of the hardest seasons of my life.

Five years later, while I was expecting a child with my partner, it was Ceeto I had to say goodbye to. Losing him broke my heart all over again. He taught me that knowing a goodbye is coming does not prepare you for it. The grief that begins before the loss does not soften what follows. It simply fills the waiting with worry.

Then came Henry, a rescue from California. Despite everything in his past, he trusted me completely, and I am not sure I had ever been loved so openly. It still amazes me that an animal who shares no language with us can understand us to the deepest depths. I have come to believe our animals are one of God's gifts.

This is why I built Love Remains. The last thing you ever do for your pet deserves the same care and attention as everything you did for them while they were alive. That belief shapes every part of how we work. Every pet is known by name, handled gently, and never rushed.

I cannot take your grief away. No one can. What I can promise is that your pet will be cared for the way you would care for them yourself. That is the work, and it is the only way I know how to do it.



Michelle

FOUNDER · LOVE REMAINS PET AFTERCARE & CREMATION

Understanding Pet Loss Grief

Pet loss grief is not a lesser form of grief. It is grief.

Your pet was part of your daily life. They were there when you woke up and when you came home. They did not judge. They did not leave. That kind of steady, unconditional presence shapes a person. When it is gone, the absence is everywhere.

Research published in PLOS ONE found that 7.5 percent of people who lost a pet met the clinical threshold for prolonged grief disorder. That rate is comparable to the grief experienced after losing a close friend or sibling.

You may experience sadness, anger, guilt, relief, numbness, or all of these at once. You may cry over their empty bed and then feel fine an hour later. None of this is wrong. Grief does not follow a straight line.

1 in 5 people who have lost both a pet and a human loved one said the pet's death was the most distressing loss they had ever faced.

Hyland, P. (2026). PLOS ONE. Maynooth University.

A RANGE OF RESPONSES

What You Might Be Feeling

Sadness and longing.

The house feels different. Their absence is physical.

Guilt.

You may second-guess decisions about treatment, timing, or euthanasia. This is one of the most common responses to pet loss.

Relief.

If your pet was suffering, feeling relief does not mean you loved them less. It means you cared about their comfort.

Anger.

At the vet, at yourself, at the unfairness of it. All normal.

Isolation.

Others may not understand. You may hear things like "it was just a dog" or "you can get another one." Those responses say more about them than about your grief.

Disruption to routine.

Feeding times, walks, the sound of them moving through the house. The small rituals disappear, and that can be disorienting.

"There is no grief like the grief that does not speak."

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Be gentle with yourself.

You are grieving love.

If Goodbye Is Coming Soon

Sometimes you know the goodbye is coming. A diagnosis, a slow decline, or a hard decision ahead. This time is painful. It can also be a gift, a chance to say what you need to say and to shape how you will remember these last days.

There is no checklist for a good goodbye. But some families find comfort in small, deliberate acts. Take only what feels right to you.

IN THE DAYS BEFORE

- Share a favourite meal. Let them enjoy something they love, without the usual rules.
- Take photos and videos. Their face, their paws, the way they move through a room.
- Ask about a paw print or nose print. Your veterinary team can often make one.
- Keep a small clipping of fur somewhere safe.
- Spend unhurried time together in the places they love most.

IF YOU ARE PLANNING A EUTHANASIA APPOINTMENT

- Decide who would like to be present. There is no right answer, and no wrong one.
- Ask whether a calm, familiar setting or a home visit is possible.
- Bring a favourite blanket or toy.
- Tell your veterinary team and aftercare provider in advance if you would like a paw print, a fur clipping, or a few quiet moments after.
- Plan something gentle for yourself afterward. You will need it.

The First 24 Hours

In the hours after a pet dies, everything can feel uncertain. These are the questions families ask most often. There are no wrong ones.

What happens now?

Nothing has to happen quickly. Take the time you need. When you are ready, your veterinary clinic or aftercare provider will guide you through each step. There is no clock running on your grief.

Can I spend time with my pet?

Yes. There is no limit on saying goodbye. Sit with them, speak to them, hold them. Leave when you are ready, not before.

How long do I have before arrangements are made?

Usually a day or two. There is no need to decide everything at once. We can collect your pet when you are ready, and we will never hurry you.

What if my pet dies at home?

Lay them somewhere cool and quiet, on a favourite blanket or in their bed. A cool room, a tile floor, or a wrapped cold pack helps. When you are ready, call us or your veterinary clinic and we will arrange a gentle transfer.

What if it happens overnight?

Rest. Nothing needs to be decided in the dark. Your pet can stay with you until morning. We will be here when you call.

Caring for the Body

After your pet dies, there are practical decisions to make. This can feel overwhelming when you are in pain. That is understandable.

Your veterinary clinic or aftercare provider can walk you through your options. You do not need to decide everything right away. If you need time, most providers can hold your pet's remains until you are ready.

COMMON AFTERCARE OPTIONS

Private Cremation

Your pet is cremated individually. Their ashes are returned to you in an urn or container. Most families choose this option.

Communal Cremation

Your pet is cremated alongside other animals. Ashes are not returned. This is a respectful and more affordable choice.

Aquamation (Alkaline Hydrolysis)

A water-based process that gently reduces the body to its natural elements. Considered a greener alternative to flame cremation. Ashes are returned to the family.

Home Burial

Some families prefer to lay their pet to rest on their own property. Check your local bylaws before proceeding.

Pet Cemetery

A dedicated resting place with the option for a headstone or marker and a peaceful spot to visit.

THE PROCESS

What Happens During Cremation

After your pet is transferred to the cremation facility, they are identified and tracked throughout the entire process. Reputable providers use tagging systems, barcodes, or steel ID tags to ensure your pet's remains are handled with care and accuracy.

The cremation itself takes place in a specialized chamber. For private cremation, your pet is cremated individually. Ashes are typically ready within a few days to two weeks, depending on the provider.

90%+ of pet families now choose cremation. It is the most common form of pet aftercare in North America.

A WORD ON TRUST

Ask your provider about chain-of-custody practices. A transparent process can bring real peace of mind.

Memorial Items

Nothing will replace your pet's presence. But a physical reminder of the bond you shared can bring comfort in the months ahead. Some are arranged shortly after death, others any time. There is no expiry on honouring someone you love.



COMMON KEEPSAKES

- Clay, ink, or silicone paw and nose prints
- Fur clippings kept in a locket, vial, or memory box
- Jewelry or keychains made with ashes, hair, or engraving
- Personalized urns in wood, stone, ceramic, or metal
- Custom artwork, portraits, or photo books
- Memorial stones, shadow boxes, or holiday ornaments
- A favourite collar, leash, or toy kept in a special place
- A cloth wrapped vessel for a gentle return home

Choosing an Urn

An urn is never required. Some families scatter ashes in a meaningful place, some keep them close at home, and some divide them into smaller keepsakes to share. If you do choose one, the right urn is simply the one that feels right to you.



Reed

Fluted lines in soft graphite, calm and architectural.



Drift

A windswept surface in warm sand, grounded by a deeper base.



Quill

The same fluting in warm cream, light and feather-fine.

There is no rush to decide. We can hold your pet's ashes in a temporary container until you are ready, and an urn can be chosen or personalized at any time.

"The greatest gift we can give them is our love; the greatest gift they leave us is their memory."

UNKNOWN

REMEMBRANCE

Creative Ways to Remember

Memorialization does not need to be expensive or elaborate. The most meaningful tributes are often the simplest. What matters is that it reflects your relationship and your values.

RITUALS AND TRIBUTES

- Write a letter to your pet. Say what you need to say.
- Light a candle on their birthday or the anniversary of their passing.
- Plant a tree, flower, or garden in their honour.
- Hold a small gathering with the people who loved them too.
- Create a memory jar. Write down favourite moments on slips of paper.
- Share a tribute on social media. Your community may surprise you.
- Dedicate a bench, plaque, or stone in a place that mattered to both of you.

ACTS OF GIVING

- Donate to an animal shelter or rescue in your pet's name.
- Volunteer at a local organization that supports animals.
- Contribute to veterinary research or a pet loss support fund.
- Sponsor a shelter animal's medical care or adoption fee.



A QUIET PAUSE

Take a Moment to Reflect

There is no script for this. Let these questions sit with you and see what comes up.

- *What object or item reminds me most of my pet?*
- *What memories bring a smile to my face?*
- *What would I say to them if I could?*
- *Is there a place I would like to visit to feel close to them?*
- *Would I like to create something with my hands?*
- *How do I want to remember them on birthdays or holidays?*
- *Is there a tradition from my culture or faith I could adapt?*
- *How could I honour them by helping other animals?*

FOR FAMILIES

Helping Children Through Loss

For many children, the death of a pet is their first experience with loss. How adults respond during this time shapes how children understand grief, death, and their own emotions.

Children grieve differently depending on age. Young children may not fully understand death. They may ask when the pet is coming back. Older children and teens may withdraw or express anger. All of these responses are normal.

The most important thing you can do is be honest, be present, and let them lead.

SIMPLE THINGS THAT HELP

- Use clear, simple language. Say your pet died. Avoid phrases like “put to sleep” or “went away,” which can confuse young children.
- Let them ask questions. Answer honestly at their level.
- Draw pictures or write stories together about favourite memories.
- Make a memory box with photos, a collar, or a favourite toy.
- Plant something together in the garden.
- Hold a small ceremony. Light a candle. Share stories.
- Read a children’s book about pet loss together.

Conversation Starters

SHARING MEMORIES

- “What is your favourite memory of them?”
- “Can you tell me about a time they made you laugh?”
- “If you could say one more thing to them, what would it be?”

RITUALS AND GOODBYES

- “Would it help to say goodbye in a special way?”
- “Should we make a spot in the house for their photo?”
- “Is there a song or story that reminds you of them?”

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

- “Would you like to draw a picture of them?”
- “Can you help me make a scrapbook about them?”
- “Should we write them a letter together?”

CONTINUING THE BOND

- “How could we help other animals in their memory?”
- “Do you want to celebrate their birthday each year?”
- “What would you like to do when you miss them?”

> Let children guide how involved they want to be. If they say no, that is okay. Do not push. Leave the door open. Simply knowing the option exists can be enough.

FOR YOU

Taking Care of Yourself

Grief takes a physical toll. You may not be sleeping well. You may not feel like eating. Your concentration may be scattered. These are normal responses to loss.

Be patient with yourself. Grief does not have a deadline. Some days will be harder than others. That does not mean you are moving backward.



PRACTICAL STEPS

- Eat regularly, even if you do not feel like it. Keep meals simple.
- Try to maintain a basic routine. Structure can be grounding.
- Move your body. A walk outside can shift your state, even briefly.
- Talk to someone who gets it. A friend, a counsellor, a pet loss support group.
- Give yourself permission to feel whatever comes up. Sadness, anger, relief, numbness. It is all valid.
- Avoid making major decisions (moving, getting a new pet) while grief is still fresh.
- Write about your pet. Journaling can help you process what you are carrying.

DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

When Others Do Not Understand

One of the hardest parts of pet loss is the silence around it. Society often does not treat pet grief as legitimate. You may hear dismissive comments or feel pressure to move on quickly.

This kind of grief, where the loss is real but not fully acknowledged by others, is called disenfranchised grief. It can make you feel isolated or question whether your pain is justified.

It is.

You do not need anyone's permission to grieve. You do not owe anyone an explanation for how long it takes. Your relationship with your pet was real, and your loss deserves to be honoured.

CONSIDER REACHING OUT IF

- Your grief feels stuck or is getting more intense over time.
- You are having trouble functioning at work or at home.
- You feel persistently guilty, hopeless, or disconnected.
- You have lost interest in things that used to matter to you.
- You feel alone and have no one to talk to about your loss.

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear."

C.S. LEWIS

CULTURE & FAITH

Remembering in Your Own Way

The way we mourn is shaped by our cultures, faiths, and beliefs. These systems offer rituals, symbols, and language that help us make sense of loss. But when it comes to pets, many people are unsure whether their traditions apply.

They can.

In many traditions, animals are considered sentient beings or spiritual companions. Honouring their life through ceremony or ritual is valid and meaningful. You can adapt practices from your faith or create your own.

You are allowed to blend traditions. You are allowed to invent something new. You are allowed to honour your pet in any way that reflects your values and the bond you shared.

> IF YOU ARE UNSURE WHERE TO START
>
> *Talk with a spiritual advisor, cultural elder, or someone you trust. These conversations can open doors to healing in ways you might not expect.*

- *Are there mourning rituals in my culture that could include my pet?*
- *What practices bring me peace when I am grieving?*
- *Is there a space where I feel connected to healing?*
- *Who in my community could help me think about this?*

Resources and Support

You do not have to navigate this alone. The following resources offer information, community, and professional support for pet loss grief.

Pet Loss Support Hotlines

ASPCA Pet Loss Hotline: (877) 474-3310

Iowa State University: (888) 478-7574

Tufts University: (508) 839-7966

Cornell University: (607) 218-7457

Online Support Communities

The Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement (aplb.org)

The Ralph Site (theralphsite.com)

Lap of Love Pet Loss Support (lapoflove.com)

Professional Support

Your veterinary clinic may have a social worker on staff

Psychology Today therapist directory (psychologytoday.com)

Search for therapists who specialize in grief or pet loss

Books

The Loss of a Pet by Wallace Sife, Ph.D.

Goodbye, Friend by Gary Kowalski

When Your Pet Dies by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Heart Dog: Surviving the Loss of Your Canine Soul Mate

For Children

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst

Dog Heaven / Cat Heaven by Cynthia Rylant

I'll Always Love You by Hans Wilhelm

OUR STANDARD

Care, from the first conversation to home.

Some families want to understand every part of their pet's care. Others would rather leave the details with us. We will explain as much as you need, and agree on the arrangements before care begins.

THE LOVE REMAINS STANDARD

- Aquamation (water cremation) uses warm water and an alkaline solution. Your pet has their own separate compartment. Other pets may be in separate compartments in the same system.
- When care is scheduled, we give you your pet's confirmation tag number and send a copy to your veterinarian. The physical tag stays with your pet through aquamation and comes home with their ashes.
- Transfer from your home or veterinarian includes the usual move from inside the home to our vehicle. Your family is not asked to lift or carry your pet. If unusual access needs extra assistance, we agree on any additional charge before you book.
- Care includes an embossed scatter tube and furoshiki cloth, an ink paw and nose print whenever possible, a clay paw impression, and memorial cards.
- We bring their ashes home, typically 3 to 5 days after we receive your pet. We confirm a time with you and can arrange another day at no extra charge. Original digital print files are kept for one year at no charge.

Michelle brings a healthcare background in palliative and end of life care to Love Remains.

Preparing to open in North Texas. Planning inquiries are welcome; we are not accepting pets yet. Current care details and prices are confirmed before arrangements are accepted.

LOVE REMAINS

Pet Aftercare

The relationship does not end here.

You may find that grief changes with time.
There is no right pace, and no need to face it alone.

Love has a way of remaining.

If you have questions about aftercare or would like
to plan ahead, we are here to talk.

EMAIL

info@loveremainspetaftercare.com

Preparing to open in North Texas.
Planning inquiries welcome. Not accepting pets yet.

This guide offers support and is not a substitute for professional care.