



# Grieving the loss of your pet

Pets are an extension of our families and are trusted and constant companions. They are a source of comfort and love. This leaflet has been created by The City of Calgary Animal & Bylaw Services to assist with the grief that families, friends and individuals feel after losing a beloved pet.

## Coping with pet loss

It is important to remember that many people who have lost a pet have felt the same way you do right now. It is okay to be sad, angry, depressed and to wonder why. Everyone grieves in his or her own way, and the length of time it takes to recover from the loss of a pet will vary. It is okay to allow yourself time to grieve for your pet.

Acknowledging your feelings of loss is an important step in overcoming them. Be prepared that not everyone will understand. Seek support from a trusted friend or family member and others who will sympathize and empathize with your loss, such as a vet, animal health technologist, groomer or fellow pet owner. Veterinarians can often recommend a pet loss counsellor or a pet loss support group in your area. Cultivate compassion towards yourself by allowing yourself the time you need to heal.

## What do I tell my children?

The loss of a family pet may be your child's first encounter with death. It is important to be open and honest and to talk to your children in a clear, straight-forward manner. Avoid phrases like, "went to sleep" or "went away" because your child may wait anxiously for your pet's return. Make it clear that the pet will not come back, but that he's happy and free of pain. Be honest about your own feelings when discussing the loss of your pet. Talk about it with your entire family and allow everyone time to grieve in his or her own way.

## Other pets

If you have other pets at home, it is normal for them to be confused with the sudden disappearance of the deceased pet. Habits and routines may change. It will be important to provide extra attention, love and care to the surviving pets to help them get through the loss of their companion and playmate. The love of your living pet can also help you and your family heal.

## Getting a new pet

It is important that you successfully work through the grief of losing this pet before getting another one. A new pet should be brought home when you are fully prepared to build a brand new loving and long-term relationship. You are the only one who will know when you are ready.

