

Loss and Grief

Supporting children through the death of a special companion animal

Everyone experiences grief differently and children are no exception. You know your child best, you will be able to gauge how much information to share and what approach to take based on their age and maturity, developmental level, and life experience.



Open Conversation

Let your child's questions guide the conversation

- Tell the truth - explain the situation to your child in language they understand. Try and use correct terminology e.g. death and dying.
- Avoid using the word 'sleep', this can confuse and scare some children.
- Talk about and express your own feelings and emotions. Invite your child to share their feelings with you.
- Normalise the grieving process – it's normal for your child to feel a range of emotions including anger, loneliness and guilt.



Remembrance

Remembering the happy times

- Ask your child how they would like to remember the animal, and decide on a special way together.
- Physical memorials can help children feel connected to the animal who has passed.
- Children often find it easier to express their feelings through creative outlets such as, art, music, dance or storytelling.
- A burial ceremony, special prayer or poem, sharing of stories, displaying photos or journaling can help children to express their feelings and work through their grieving process.



Give them time

Continue to talk about the animal with love and fond memories

- The grief will ease but the happy memories are forever.
- Don't rush out and 'replace' the animal. Allow your child time to grieve.

Seek Support

Contact your GP if you feel your child needs further support

- Helpful website:
www.kidshealth.org.nz/bereavement-reactions-children-young-people-age-group



For more information visit www.sPCA.nz