

# Helping Pets Grieve the Loss of a Housemate

Animals become attached when they share the same daily routines and leisure time; over the years, their bonds can grow to be especially strong. Pets that share an intense bond might play together, sleep together, eat their meals at the same time, and may shadow each other around the house. Separation may result in the surviving pet to display a distressed reaction that can mirror grief. It is also normal to show no signs at all.

## What does the Research Say?

- ♥ The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) conducted the study, “Companion Animal Mourning Project,” which shed new light on the grieving process of dogs.
- ♥ The study concluded that 66% of dogs experienced four or more behavioral changes (such as decreased appetite, sleep pattern fluctuations, increased vocalization, and an increase in “clinginess” to their owners), after the loss of a housemate, which indicated that they too experience grief.
- ♥ The study also concluded that 65% of cats had four or more behavioral changes (such as decreased appetite, sleep pattern fluctuations, increased or decreased meowing), after the loss of a housemate, which also indicated grief.

(Buzhardt, DVM)



## General Grief Symptoms

- ♥ Appetite changes (eating more or less than usual)
- ♥ Acting withdrawn or despondent
- ♥ Personality changes (aloof pet suddenly wanting attention & vice versa)
- ♥ Pacing or searching the house
- ♥ Hiding from or avoiding family members
- ♥ Aggressive/destructive behaviors
- ♥ Sleep pattern changes (sleeping more or less than usual)

### Manifestations in Dogs

- ♥ Whining or howling
- ♥ Signs of separation anxiety
- ♥ Excessive clinginess

### Manifestations in Cats

- ♥ Yowling or crying
- ♥ Changes in grooming
- ♥ Changes in bathroom habits

**Keep in mind that some pets may not show any signs at all!**

### How You Can Help

- ♥ Keep routines as consistent as possible
- ♥ Extra love and attention
- ♥ Do more of what your pet loves to do
  - Exercise
  - Interesting toys
  - Extra time cuddling
- ♥ Keep your pet's diet & mealtimes the same
- ♥ Be patient with inappropriate behaviors
- ♥ If your pet enjoys company, invite friends over to visit
- ♥ Talk to your pets; tell them what is happening
- ♥ Talk to your veterinarian as needed
- ♥ Reach out to our friendly Social Work Team at: [TStOnge@ethosvet.com](mailto:TStOnge@ethosvet.com)

Sources: (Bauhaus, 2018), (Bender, 2020), (Lagoni, 2008), (Paretts, 2019), (Shojai, 2020)

**Our Social Work Team is always available to support & partner with you.  
We are reachable at: [TStOnge@ethosvet.com](mailto:TStOnge@ethosvet.com).**