

DO PETS GRIEVE?

What many people find hard to believe is that animals can form very firm attachments with each other. Even pets that outwardly seem to barely get along will exhibit intense stress reactions when separated. In fact, grieving pets can show many symptoms identical to those experienced by the bereaved pet owner. The surviving pet(s) may become restless, anxious and depressed. There may also be much sighing, along with sleep and eating disturbances. Often, grieving pets will search for their dead companions and crave more attention from their owners.

How can an owner help the grieving pet??

1. Keep the surviving pet(s) routines as normal as possible.
2. Try not to unintentionally reinforce the behavior changes.
 - If the pet's appetite is picky, don't keep changing the food. All that does is create a more finicky pet.
 - Don't overdo the attention given to the pet(s) as it can lead to separation anxiety.
3. Allow the surviving animals to work out the new dominance hierarchy themselves.
 - There may be scuffles and fights as the animals work out the new pecking order (dogs mostly)
4. Don't get a new pet to help the grieving pet(s) unless the owner is ready.
 - Will backfire unless the owner is emotionally ready for a new pet.
 - People still grieving won't have the energy for it.

Should the owner let the surviving animals see and smell their dead companion?

There is no evidence that doing so will help the surviving pet(s), but some people claim that it does. Usually, all it accomplishes is to make the owner feel better. Therefore, if the owner wants to have the surviving pets "say good-bye," then it should be allowed.

http://www.rainbowbridge.com/Grief_Support_Center/Grief_Support/Do_Pets_Grieve.htm

