



# When the whole household is grieving

*Children, partners, and other animals all feel the loss differently.*

## TALKING TO CHILDREN

- **Use plain language.** "Died" is clearer than "passed away" or "went to sleep." Soft words can frighten more than they soothe.
- **Tell them it wasn't their fault.** Say it out loud, even if they haven't asked.
- **Let them see you sad.** Modeling grief helps them feel safe to feel it.
- **Include them in something.** A drawing, a buried object, a candle. Ritual helps children process.
- **Expect questions to circle back.** They will ask the same things days and weeks later. That's how children grieve.

## OTHER PETS IN THE HOME

- **They notice.** Animals respond to the absence — they may search rooms, vocalize, sleep more, or eat less.
- **Keep routines steady.** Walks, mealtimes, and bedtime should stay the same.
- **Let them say goodbye if you can.** Some vets allow surviving pets to be present, or to see the body afterward. This often reduces searching behavior.
- **Don't rush to "replace."** Wait until the household feels stable. A new animal is a new relationship, not a substitute.
- **Watch for two weeks.** Most behavior changes resolve. If they don't, call your vet.

## WHAT TO SAY TO FAMILY

- **You don't owe an explanation.** "Our pet died and we're not okay" is a complete sentence.
- **Decline what doesn't help.** Visits, food, advice — say no without guilt.
- **Ask for the small thing.** A walk, a meal dropped off, someone to take the trash out for a week.
- **Name the loss.** Family members who didn't live with the animal may not know how big this is. Telling them helps.
- **It's okay if grief is uneven.** One person may cry for weeks. Another may not cry at all. Both are real.

## WHAT HELPS EVERYONE — TOGETHER

Mark the day. Light a candle. Tell one specific story. Let the small things be the ceremony — a walk in a place they loved, a meal that was theirs to share. Ritual is how a household closes a chapter together.