



BARRINGTON COAST VETS

Diamond Beach Veterinary Clinic

1/22 Diamond Dr, Diamond Beach, NSW 2430

P: (02) 6559 2277

E: diamondbeachvet@gmail.com

Helping Pets Through the Loss of a Companion

It's not uncommon for owners to wonder how their other pets will react when a furry family member passes away. Just as humans grieve in different ways, animals can also experience loss in their own unique manner. This can make recognising grief in pets a little tricky, but understanding the signs and knowing how to support them can make a big difference.

Do Pets Experience Grief?

Pets often form close bonds with each other, and while we can't fully understand their inner emotions, many animals clearly react to the absence of a companion. Even pets that didn't appear particularly close may still respond to the change in their environment. Over years of observing families and their animals, there's little doubt that pets can experience a form of grief.

Common Signs of Grief in Pets

Not every pet will display the same behaviours, but some of the changes you might notice include:

- Becoming more clingy or seeking extra attention
- Spending more time in areas their companion favoured
- Loss of interest in food or play
- Lethargy or sleeping more than usual
- Withdrawal or hiding from family members
- Increased vocalisation (crying, barking, or meowing)
- Wandering or pacing as if searching for their companion
- Heightened irritability or destructive behaviour

Some pets may not show any obvious changes at all—and that's also a perfectly normal response.

Differences Between Dogs and Cats

Research suggests that dogs and cats often show similar grief-related behaviours, such as wanting to be closer to their owners or spending time in places where their companion used to rest. Cats are often more likely to vocalise, while dogs may tend to sleep more.

Helping Pets Adjust to Loss

1. Support Behaviour Changes

Offer reassurance and extra affection when needed, and praise positive behaviours. If your pet's appetite declines or you're concerned about their wellbeing, speak with your vet to rule out any health issues.

2. Keep Familiar Scents and Spaces

Avoid removing your late pet's bedding or belongings too quickly. Leaving these items around for days or weeks can provide comfort through familiar smells. If you do decide to remove them, do so gradually.

3. Maintain Routine

Consistency in feeding times, walks, and play can help reduce stress. Including enjoyable activities—such as play sessions, training games, or social outings—can also help lift their mood.

4. Monitor Relationships

The loss of a pet can alter dynamics between remaining animals. Watch for signs of tension, anxiety, or changes in hierarchy, and address issues early.

5. Use Calming Aids

Products such as Adaptil for dogs or Feliway for cats release synthetic calming pheromones that can reduce anxiety during times of change.

6. Take Your Time Before Adopting Again

Allow your pet (and yourself) time to adjust before considering a new companion. When the time feels right, choose a pet whose needs and temperament suit your household, and introduce them slowly.

Should Other Pets Be Present at Euthanasia?

When possible, allowing remaining pets to be present—or at least see their companion afterwards—can help them understand what has happened. Many will sniff or sit quietly nearby, while others may simply walk away. This brief moment can sometimes make the adjustment easier. However, every situation is different, and you know your pets best—if it's likely to cause stress or conflict, it may not be the right choice.

Final Thoughts

Saying goodbye to a pet is always hard, and surviving pets may grieve in ways both subtle and obvious. While grief has no set timeline, changes in behaviour often last anywhere from a few weeks to several months. By recognising their needs, maintaining stability, and offering comfort, we can help them through the adjustment—and in doing so, we often find comfort ourselves.

Kind Regards,

The team at Barrington Coast Vets

CLINIC HOURS

Monday	9am-4pm (by appointment)
Tuesday	9am-4pm (by appointment)
Wednesday	FARM RUN DAY (No vet in-clinic)
Thursday	9am-4pm (by appointment)
Friday	9am-4pm (by appointment)
Saturday	EMERGENCY ONLY
Sunday	EMERGENCY ONLY