



Helpful Phrases for Condolence Cards & Notes

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When patients die, the condolences you and your staff offer can make all the difference in the world to your clients. Follow-up telephone calls, flowers, and ClayPaws® prints are wonderful, heartfelt ways to express your sympathy. In addition, sending condolence cards that specifically address the grief and healing process associated with the loss of a pet is a routine practice in many veterinary clinics today and much appreciated by clients.

Condolence cards are available from a multitude of companies. It's a good idea to purchase a variety of cards in large quantities and keep them on hand in your clinic. Clinical experience says it's best to sign cards and write notes in your own handwriting. Clients who receive condolences with the name of a veterinary practice pre-stamped on a card report feeling like the gesture is more of a marketing ploy than a sincere effort to provide comfort.

When sending written condolences to clients or speaking to them after the deaths of their pets, the following points should be emphasized:

- Use the pet's name and be certain you refer to the pet with the correct gender.
- If it is true, reassure your clients that they did everything they could do for their pets and, in the end, made timely decisions.
- Recall something special and personal about the pet.
- Offer a referral to a trusted, qualified human service professional, if appropriate.
- Invite clients to contact you if they have questions or concerns.



(A Pet's Love Veterinary Wisdom® Condolence Card)

When writing a note on your condolence cards, it's important to convey your sincerity and compassion. The best approach is to be honest, while not making any assumptions about how your clients might actually feel. Some helpful phrases are:

- "Please accept our sincere condolences regarding Toby's recent death. She was a gentle, loving dog and we can only imagine the empty space her death has left in your daily lives. We know you'll find comfort in the memories of the love she gave you."
- "Toby was special to us, too. We will always remember how she..." (continue with personal memories).
- "We will all miss her, yet we know that you, her family, will miss her most of all."
- "We have thought of you often since Toby's death. We know how special she was to you and understand your feelings of grief."
- "We believe that your decision to help Toby die was the right one. You did everything you could for her and, in the end, spared her any further pain and suffering."
- "We are enclosing some information about pet loss and grief. It takes time to adjust to the loss of a family member. Being aware of what normal grief looks and feels like can help."
- "If you have questions or, if we can be of further help to you, please don't hesitate to call."
- "Thank you for letting us be a part of Toby's life. We will always remember her."

*Adapted from Morehead D., Lagoni L., et al. *Guidelines for Bond-Centered Practice*, 2001. (Out of print.)