



When Should I Get A New Pet?

Dana Durrance, M.A.

Deciding whether or not to adopt a new pet after a much-loved one has died can be tricky and confusing. Intellectually, we know that every relationship we have with our pets is unique so it's impossible to find another animal to "replace" the one that has died. Unfortunately, the emotional side of ourselves doesn't always read the same grief manual. It's normal to want a loved one back and so the impulse to adopt a new pet comes from a genuine place of pain and sadness. Adopting a new pet may make us feel good in the moment, but what happens when we realize that this new pet is nothing like our other companion?

The key lies in WHY we want to adopt a new pet. If the desire to adopt a new pet stems from the desperate need to "replace" a pet, it's probably not a good idea. There is no way to replace a loved one so finding another will not relieve us from our grief.

Having said that, there are people who can successfully bond with a new animal while grieving the death of another all at the same time. While some people need time and space to grieve their pet's death, there are others who derive comfort and support by adopting a new animal. This can help them move forward with their grief by reminding them that their ability to love never dies.



If you or your family is considering adopting a new pet after a loss, it's important to ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do I want to adopt a new pet?
- What do I hope this pet will provide for me?
- What about the rest of my family? Does everyone feel the same about this or are there some differences?
- Am I ready to take on the challenges that young (or new) pets create? If I'm used to a calm, steady, predictable routine with my senior pet, am I ready to face the chaos and lack of routine a new pet brings?
- Do I have the necessary time, energy, and financial resources to give to a new pet? Grief can make people feel utterly exhausted and wiped out. A new pet requires our time and energy.
- How do the children in the family feel about adopting a new pet? It's common for children to push parents for a new pet right away but it's important for them to realize that we simply cannot replace loved ones.

Our grief takes time but when we do adopt a new one, we will love that animal for who he/she is without making comparisons to our companion that has died.

For more information, visit the Veterinary Wisdom Resource Center at www.veterinarywisdompetparents.com. 