

ClayPaws® Keepsakes are Comforting Links to Beloved Pets

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On the day that my favorite cat Chelsea died, I spent all afternoon wandering around my home, searching for a special item that would help me feel close to her. Chelsea had been an indoor cat, so she didn't wear a collar. She was older when I adopted her, so playing with toys was never her cup of tea! I did have a clipping of her gray fur that my veterinarian gave me after Chelsea was euthanized, but touching it reminded me more of her loss than of her love.

I finally zeroed in on a nightlight that I'd plugged in beside my bed. Made from red glass in the shape of a heart, it cast a comforting glow at night. I declared it "Chelsea's Light" and, from that point on, it became symbolic of the sweet cat who used to sleep curled beside me under the covers every night of her life. Today, more than 20 years after her death, Chelsea's Light still reminds me of her.

Any item that connects you in a comforting and meaningful way to a pet who has died is a linking object. A meaningful link to your beloved pet can ease the pain of grief and put you in touch with the love you and your pet shared. Well-meaning friends and family might advise you to get rid of things that belonged to your pet so you won't have constant reminders of your loss. However, research and clinical experience suggest you may feel tremendous regret if you discard all reminders of your pet. If there are no traces left of your pet in your home, it can feel like your companion animal never existed!



During my time in clinical practice as a veterinary grief counselor, I spoke with hundreds of pet parents who cherished the items that connected them to pets who had died. They carried clips of their pets' fur in their purses, wore their dogs' tags as jewelry, and even slept with their cats' whiskers or favorite catnip mouse under their pillows. One memorable client kept his dog's remains in the glove compartment of his car because his dog went to work with him every day when he was alive.

Many of my clients also cherished the ClayPaws® prints they received from their veterinarians or pet cremation services. My cat Chelsea died before meaningful keepsakes, like clay paw prints, were available. Though I still find comfort in my red nightlight, I'd love to have a ClayPaws® print to "link" me to her in a more personal way.

A ClayPaws® print is a handmade keepsake that can't be mass produced. Each paw print set in clay, with its distinctive lines, claw marks, and indentations, is as individual as a human fingerprint.

Your ClayPaws® print is symbolic of the close connection you shared with your companion animal. It creates a lasting link to your beloved pet and lasting comfort in the years ahead.

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