



## General Pet Loss and Children’s Grief Overview

### *Helping Babies*

(birth through one-year-old)

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This is a basic guide and is intended to help adults as they support children through pet loss and grief.

#### **In General**

Children:

- deal with grief differently than adults due to their age and stage of development, but they grieve just as deeply.
- are unique and should be encouraged to grieve in their own, individual ways.
- need to be provided with age appropriate knowledge and understanding about life and death, taught a variety of coping skills, and receive solid emotional support from family and friends.

#### **Getting Specific**

When pets die, babies:

- feel the rise in tension caused by loss and grief, but are unable to understand the cause.
- may exhibit signs of grief like crying, clinging, or regressing, but are most likely responding to rising stress level within the family rather than the loss itself.

#### **Helping Children**

Adults can:

- still talk to babies about the loss even though babies are unable to understand death.
- comfort babies with hugs, cuddling, and time focused on them.
- avoid introducing additional stress or reinforcing negative or unwanted behaviors by keeping family routines as normal as possible.



The amount of time children spend with their pets, as well as the emotional comfort they believe their pets provide, deepens the bonds between them. Children who think of their pets as “best friends” are often more attached than children who don’t think of their pets in this way.

For more information visit the Veterinary Wisdom® Resource Center at [www.veterinarywisdompetparents.com](http://www.veterinarywisdompetparents.com)