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"Where Education, Experience and Compassion Meet."

BEST FRIENDS, INDEED!

While it's a well-known fact that people get very attached to their pets and that for most pet owners, pets are family, what's less commonly known are the beneficial effects that pets have on both the physical and mental well-being of their owners (or "ownees", as may be more accurate!) Research studies have shown that pet ownership can reduce physiological signs of stress, including lowering heart rate and blood pressure, as well as influence people's subjective view of their stress level. Pets have been documented as important sources of social support as well (see APA Monitor, December 2002). It is believed that pets are able to have these remarkable effects on our health and well-being by providing nonjudgmental companionship and unconditional love, to a degree that our human friends and family simply cannot do.

In light of the above, it is not surprising that when a pet-owner loses their beloved companion, the loss can be devastating. Unfortunately, not everyone understands this, and pet grievers often feel as though they are not entitled to grieve the loss as fully as they would that of a human companion, and may even be told they need to "get over it" after a few weeks or so. This in turn can make the grieving process all the more difficult and result in even higher levels of distress. Fortunately, awareness of pet loss issues is on the rise, and more resources are available for those affected, including individual and group support and counseling as well as appropriate memorial services for pets. These, along with increased understanding of friends, family, and co-workers, can greatly ease the grieving process and help people recover from their loss more quickly and fully.