

When A Pet Dies

By Sarah Burleton NY Times bestselling author

My fourteen year old boxer, Maximus, passed away this week. He was an older dog with a couple of health problems, but I was still shocked and it was completely unexpected when he started to have seizures one day, and by the next afternoon, he was gone. Just like that, an important member of our little family was gone forever. It was heartbreaking to say the least. This wasn't my first pet to ever pass away. There was my first dog who lived to the ripe old age of eighteen before passing peacefully in his sleep. My first horse Andy, who got his halter caught on the water tub in the pasture and flipped it over on his neck. My goat that Mom brutally murdered one afternoon when I was at school because he ate her flowers. Then add in the hundreds of chickens, bunnies, hamsters, and goldfish that have come in and out of my life; you could easily say that I've been around the block once or twice when it comes to dealing with an animal passing away.



But it still crushes me, every single time an animal in my life passes away, I feel as though I just lost one of my best friends. That animal, for however long it was in my life, brought joy and happiness to me. That animal who managed to put a smile on my face every day, made me forget about my “human” problems for a moment, and who loved me no matter what.

We get our pets knowing fully well that they aren't going to be around for our entire lives. We know that we will only get a few short years with these little creatures and we spend those years spoiling them as much as we do our children. They are a part of our family, they are in our family photos, and our memories are filled with happy memories of our beloved pets.

When I was a child, I honestly don't think I would have made it without the support and love of my pets. After a bad day with Mom, a particularly rough beating, or a day at school filled with bullying and teasing, I knew that I could count on my dog, my horse, my goat, or my other animals to make me feel loved and wanted. I knew that even though Mom thought I was dirt and scum, my animals thought I was the best thing to ever happen to them. When the kids at school treated me like trash and made fun of me; I knew I could count on my animals to be by my side and not care a bit about

what brand of clothes I was wearing or what my hair looked like. And when I was at my loneliest and needed a shoulder to cry on, my animals were always there for me.

I leaned on my animals the way that some people may lean on their family or friends for support. My interaction with humans during my childhood was filled with nothing but pain and disappointment; the only things that seemed to understand me were my animals. They didn't need to say a word to make me feel better; just seeing their tails wag, their big brown eyes light up, and watching them run excitedly to me seemed to make all of my troubles go away for just a few moments. They were my light in a world full of darkness.

RIP Max – I will miss our walks, our car rides, playing with you in the backyard, and most of all, I will miss holding you when I am sad. You were a great dog.

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