



A New Friend

1. When is the right time to get a new friend?

Following the loss of a pet, the priority is to acknowledge and work through your grief. It can be very tempting to rush out straight away and get a new friend and undoubtedly in some cases this can help with recovering from the bereavement. However it can also lead to problems for both you and your new companion and in general it is advised to wait for a period of time. Ultimately there is no 'right time' to get a new pet that applies to everyone and it is an individual decision depending on a variety of factors; indeed some people never feel able or wish to get another pet. Essentially the right time is when you feel you have worked through your grief sufficiently to be able to look ahead and be positive about a new companion rather than continuing to dwell on your loss.

If you are unsure about how you may react to having a new pet in the home, then you may consider fostering. Many rescue shelters and rehoming centres are in desperate need of temporary foster carers for animals awaiting a new permanent home. Sometimes this is because the shelter is full, in other cases the poor animal may be unable to cope with the stressful environment of a rescue centre.

Once you have got a new pet, why not tell everyone else about him/her and post a photo or video too using the Tributes on the Ralph site.

2. What are some important considerations with respect to my new friend?

One of the most important things to remember is that by getting a new pet you are not seeking to 'replace' or forget your last companion and you must not therefore feel guilty or disloyal – there is arguably no better way to honour your deceased companion's life than by giving a new chance to another one. There are plenty of animals in the world in need of a good and loving home and you will be forming and enjoying a new human-animal bond not replacing the last one. It is therefore also important to remember that your new friend is an individual in his/her own right and you should not expect him/her to be the same as your



last one with respect to personality and behaviour; to do so is to put unfair expectations on your new companion. Develop a new and individual relationship with your new friend.

When choosing your new pet it is essential to take your time to be sure that you are making the right decision, and one with which the whole family – especially children as far as possible – is agreed. Animal shelters and rehoming facilities typically employ a vetting procedure to try and ensure both that you can meet the needs of your new pet and that your chosen pet is suitable for you and your home environment. Don't try and rush this process, it will be worth the wait!

Another consideration that it can be easy to overlook is how getting a new pet can affect other surviving pets in the home. Just as with human members of the family, pets can also grieve the loss of a companion (see *Pets and Pet Loss* on the Ralph site) and some of the same concerns apply; will introducing a new pet act as a source of comfort or resentment or indeed will your surviving pets be indifferent? It can take time for pets to form new relationships and work out their hierarchy and it is essential to ensure that you devote equal time and attention to the surviving pets as to the new one.

3. Where can I get a new friend from?

There are literally millions of animals in the world in need of a good and loving home and the Ralph site strongly encourages people to get new pets from animal rescue shelters and rehoming centres. The Ralph site has a list of links either to rehoming websites or to directories of rescue shelters and centres mostly in the United Kingdom that will hopefully help you find your new pet.