A photograph of three children and their pets in a garden. On the left, a young girl with blonde hair and a pink bow is lying on the grass, smiling. In the center, a taller girl with long blonde hair is lying on the grass, holding a grey kitten. On the right, a younger girl with brown hair is lying on the grass, smiling. A brown dachshund dog is sitting next to the girl in the center. A small brown dog is lying on the grass next to the girl on the left. The background is a lush garden with green plants and pink flowers.

People, Pets and the World We Share:

*Studying the dramatic, lasting impact
a pet has on a child*

American Humane Association™

The nation's voice for the protection of children & animals™



People, Pets, and the World We Share:

Studying the dramatic, lasting impact a pet has on a child

Executive Summary

Since 1877, American Humane Association has celebrated the human-animal bond, which is a vital cornerstone for humane communities. As the nation's oldest humane organization, our unique dual mission is to improve the welfare, wellness and wellbeing of both children and animals. We recognize that in order to understand the world of people, pets, and the inextricable link we share, more research on the power of the bond still needs to be done. American Humane Association is pleased to share the results of this survey initiative as an important step for future work to assess the importance of pets to children.

In March 2012, a survey was conducted that speaks to the remarkable bond and loyalty between children and their pets. The survey gathered information from adults on the effect of losing a pet during childhood. An email survey was sent on behalf of American Humane Association's Animal Welfare Research Institute to the association's members and Facebook fans, and was open for one week with 294 people responding. Of those respondents providing information on their gender, 93.2 percent were women (272 of 292). With regards to age, 12 percent were under the age of 30 years, 44.8 percent were between the ages of 30 – 49 years, and 43.2 percent were over the age of 50 years.

Of respondents who answered questions with a specific pet in mind, 71.8 percent selected a dog and 23.8 percent selected a cat. The remaining respondents answered for a myriad of other animal types: horses, rabbits, hamsters, goats, or birds. Of those responding who lost a childhood pet from injury, disease, or old age, 38.9 percent (105 of 270) reported that the loss still affects them. Similarly, of those responding whose pet was given away, ran away, or had uncertain disposition, 44.4 percent (36 of 81) reported that the loss still affects them.

Although many adults in this survey reported to still be affected by the loss of a childhood pet, support for aiding the child-pet relationship in families is often lacking. American Humane Association hopes that this survey will guide future efforts in creating healthier and happier families and communities.

Patricia N. Olson, DVM, PhD
Founder, Animal Welfare Research Institute
Chief Veterinary Advisor

Robin R. Ganzert, PhD
President and CEO

People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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Demographics

Middle-aged adults were the highest demographic represented in the survey, with nearly 45 percent of respondents between the ages of 30-49 years; the next highest were adults 50 and older, comprising roughly 43 percent. Twelve percent of respondents were young adults.

Women overwhelmingly participated in the survey compared to men, with more than 93 percent of respondents being female.

Nearly all of the 50 states were represented. Eleven states (California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia) had 10 or more responses per state while three states (Alaska, Delaware, and South Dakota) and the District of Columbia had no responses.

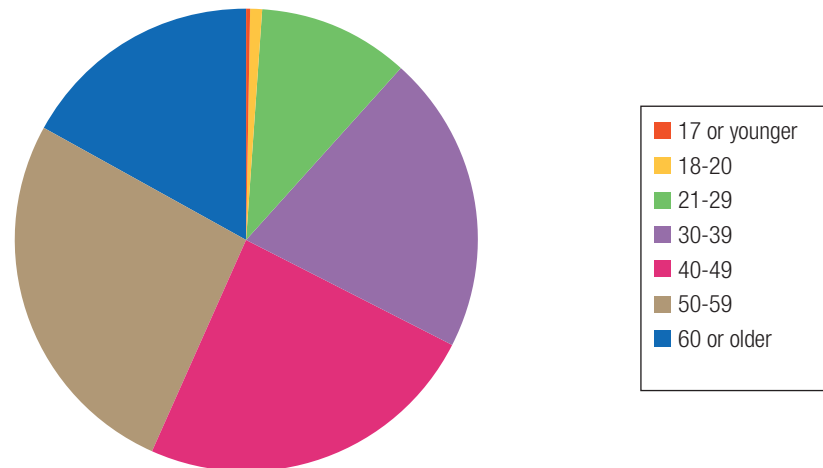
Question 1

People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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Which category below includes your age?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
17 or younger	0.3%	1
18-20	1.0%	3
21-29	10.5%	31
30-39	20.7%	61
40-49	24.1%	71
50-59	26.5%	78
60 or older	16.7%	49
<i>answered question</i>		294
<i>skipped question</i>		0



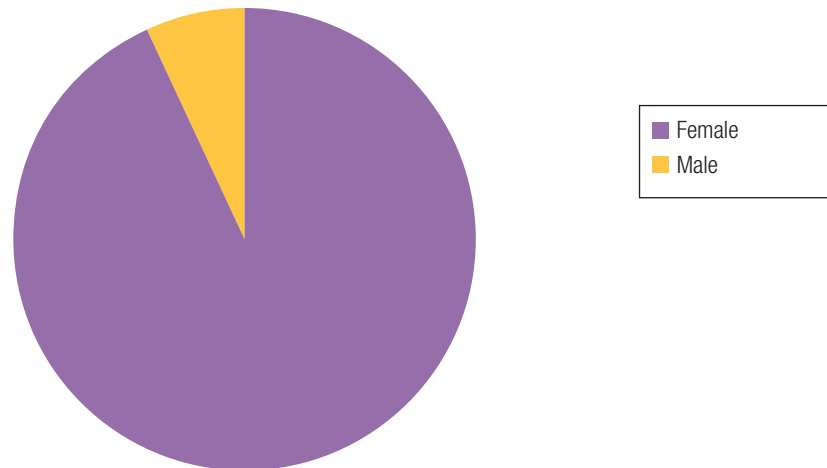
Note: If participant answered 17 or younger, the survey ended.

Question 2

People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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Sex		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	93.2%	272
Male	6.8%	20
answered question		292
skipped question		2



Question 6

People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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In which state or U.S. territory do you live?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Alabama	1.8%	5
Alaska	0.0%	0
American Samoa	0.4%	1
Arizona	2.6%	7
Arkansas	0.7%	2
California	5.1%	14
Colorado	5.1%	14
Connecticut	1.5%	4
Delaware	0.0%	0
District of Columbia (DC)	0.0%	0
Florida	6.6%	18
Georgia	4.4%	12
Guam	0.0%	0
Hawaii	1.1%	3
Idaho	1.1%	3
Illinois	4.4%	12
Indiana	0.7%	2
Iowa	0.7%	2
Kansas	0.7%	2
Kentucky	2.9%	8
Louisiana	1.8%	5
Maine	0.7%	2
Maryland	1.8%	5
Massachusetts	2.6%	7
Michigan	2.9%	8
Minnesota	1.5%	4
Mississippi	0.7%	2
Missouri	2.6%	7

In which state or U.S. territory do you live?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Montana	0.4%	1
Nebraska	0.4%	1
Nevada	1.1%	3
New Hampshire	0.4%	1
New Jersey	3.7%	10
New Mexico	0.4%	1
New York	5.5%	15
North Carolina	1.8%	5
North Dakota	1.1%	3
Northern Marianas Islands	0.0%	0
Ohio	4.0%	11
Oklahoma	0.4%	1
Oregon	1.8%	5
Pennsylvania	5.1%	14
Puerto Rico	0.0%	0
Rhode Island	1.5%	4
South Carolina	0.7%	2
South Dakota	0.0%	0
Tennessee	1.5%	4
Texas	5.1%	14
Utah	1.8%	5
Vermont	0.4%	1
Virginia	4.4%	12
Virgin Islands	0.4%	1
Washington	1.1%	3
West Virginia	0.7%	2
Wisconsin	1.1%	3
Wyoming	0.7%	2

answered question 273
skipped question 21

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Children and Their Pets

Almost all of the people surveyed owned pets as children – 290 of 292 answered in the affirmative. For the two who did not, their survey ended there; a further two opted to skip this question. The following question asked if survey participants still owned their pet, and 281 no longer had the animal. Given that many of the respondents are adults, the vast majority had their childhood animals 20 years ago or more (61.5%).

Although children often have more than one pet, for the purposes of the survey, participants were asked to select only one animal out of seven options. Dogs were by far the most popular childhood pet among respondents, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the responses (71.8%), cats took second with 23.8 percent, followed by a tie between horses and “other” (2.9% apiece).

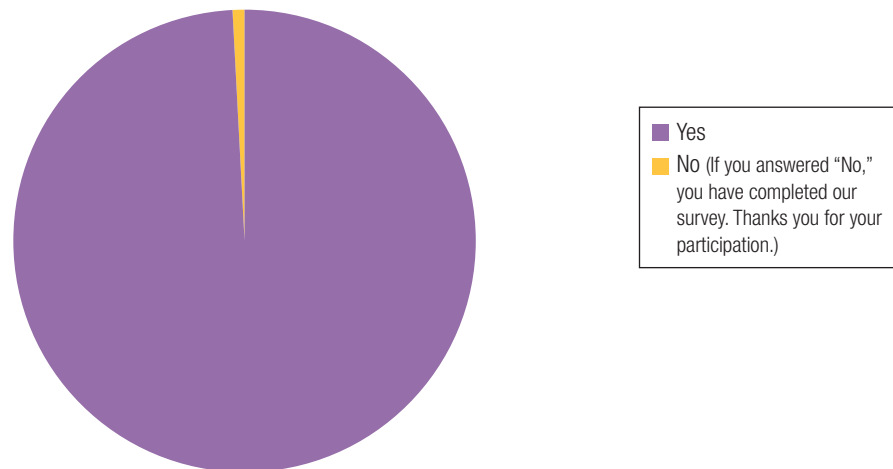
Question 3

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As a child, did you have an animal?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	99.3%	290
No (if you answered "No," you have completed our survey.)	0.7%	2
<i>answered question</i>		292
<i>skipped question</i>		2



Note: If participant answered no, the survey ended.

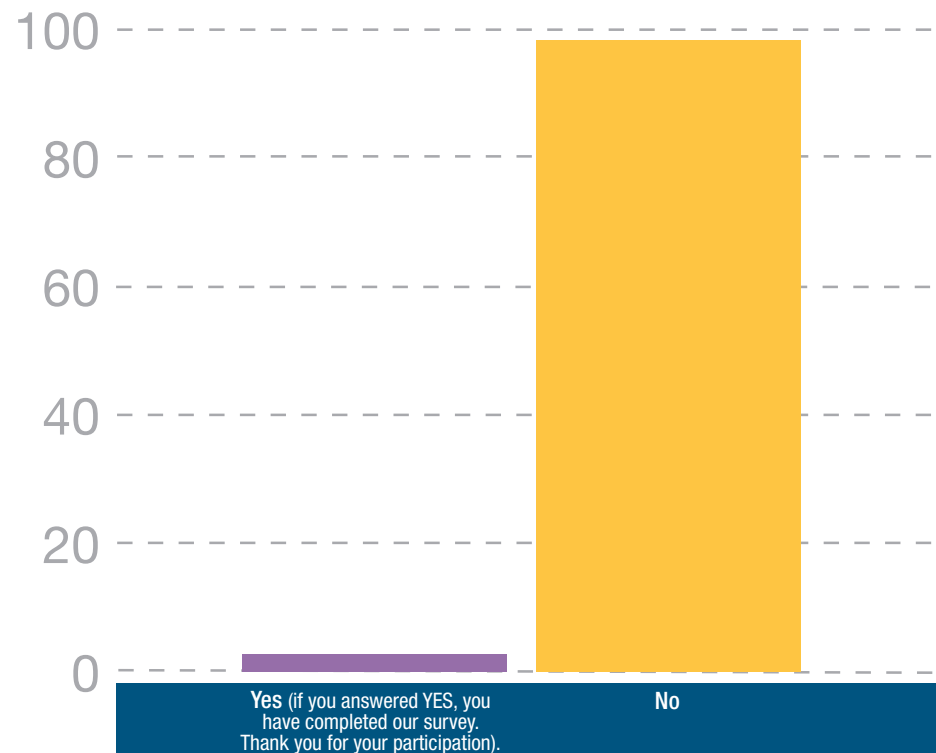
Question 4

People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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Is this animal still alive/with you?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes (if you answered "Yes," you have completed our survey)	2.8%	8
No	98.3%	281
<i>answered question</i>		286
<i>skipped question</i>		8



Note: If participant answered yes, the survey ended.

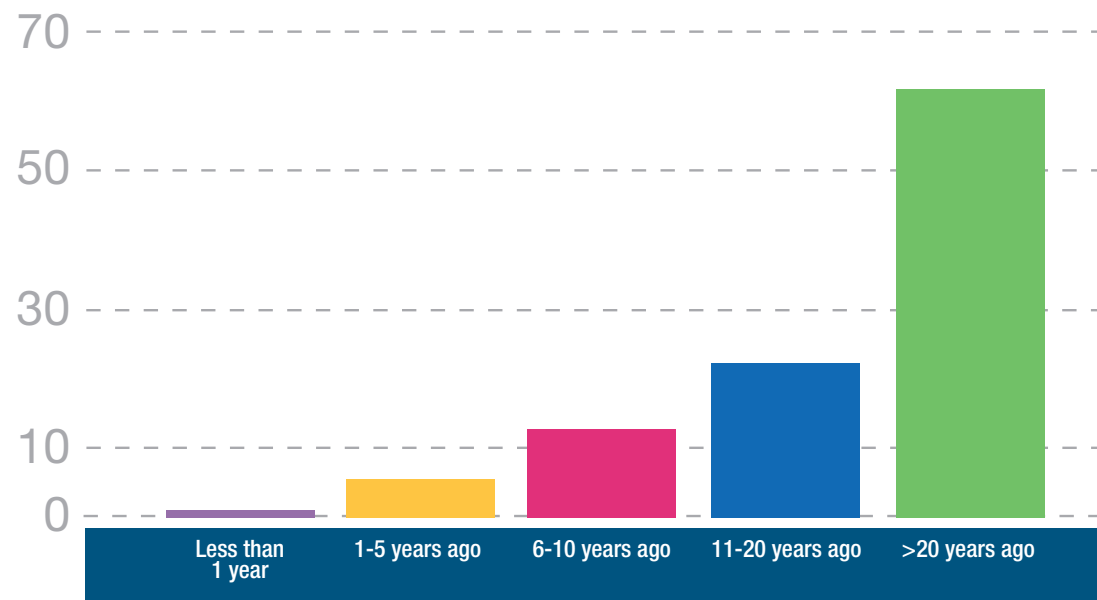
Question 5

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If you answered no to the previous question, how long has it been since you lost this animal?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year	1.1%	3
1-5 years ago	5.5%	15
6-10 years ago	12.7%	35
11-20 years ago	22.2%	61
>20 years ago	61.5%	169
<i>answered question</i>		275
<i>skipped question</i>		19



People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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The Emotional, Lasting Impact of an Animal's Death or Loss on a Child

For many children, the passing of an animal might be their first experience dealing with the death of a member of their family. We asked them how their animal's death affected them if their pet died from injury, disease, or old age. More than half of respondents said that the death of a pet affected them at the time of loss. Almost 40 percent (105 respondents) said that the loss still affects them. Only 5.2 percent said it did not affect them much at the time with a further 4.4 percent stating that the animal did not die when they owned it. The method of death (e.g., euthanasia) was captured for those who died.

Other respondents indicated that they lost their animal because it was given away or ran away, while others were uncertain as to their pet's disposition. Nearly 45 percent of respondents indicated that they were affected at the time the animal left the family. Interestingly, 45 percent of respondents also indicated that the loss of a childhood pet still affects them as adults – often many years later.

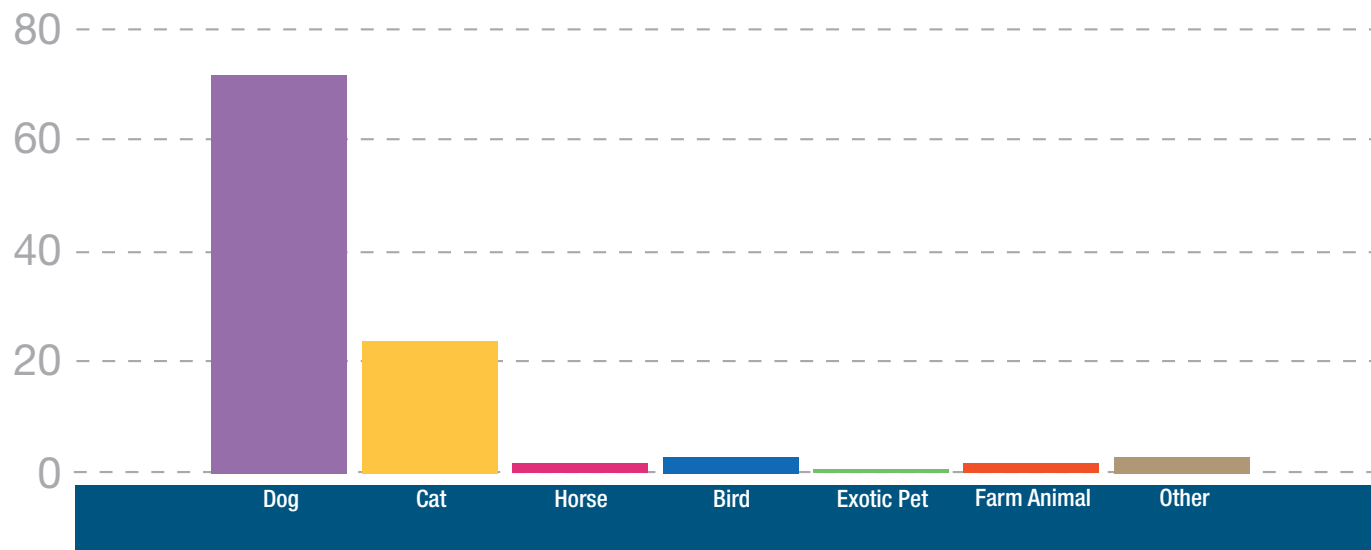
Question 7

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What kind of animal did you have as a child? Please choose ONE animal below and answer the rest of the questions in this survey with only THAT animal in mind.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Dog	71.8%	196
Cat	23.8%	65
Horse	1.8%	5
Bird	2.9%	8
Exotic Pet	0.7%	2
Farm Animal	1.8%	5
Other	2.9%	8
answered question		273
skipped question		21



Question 8

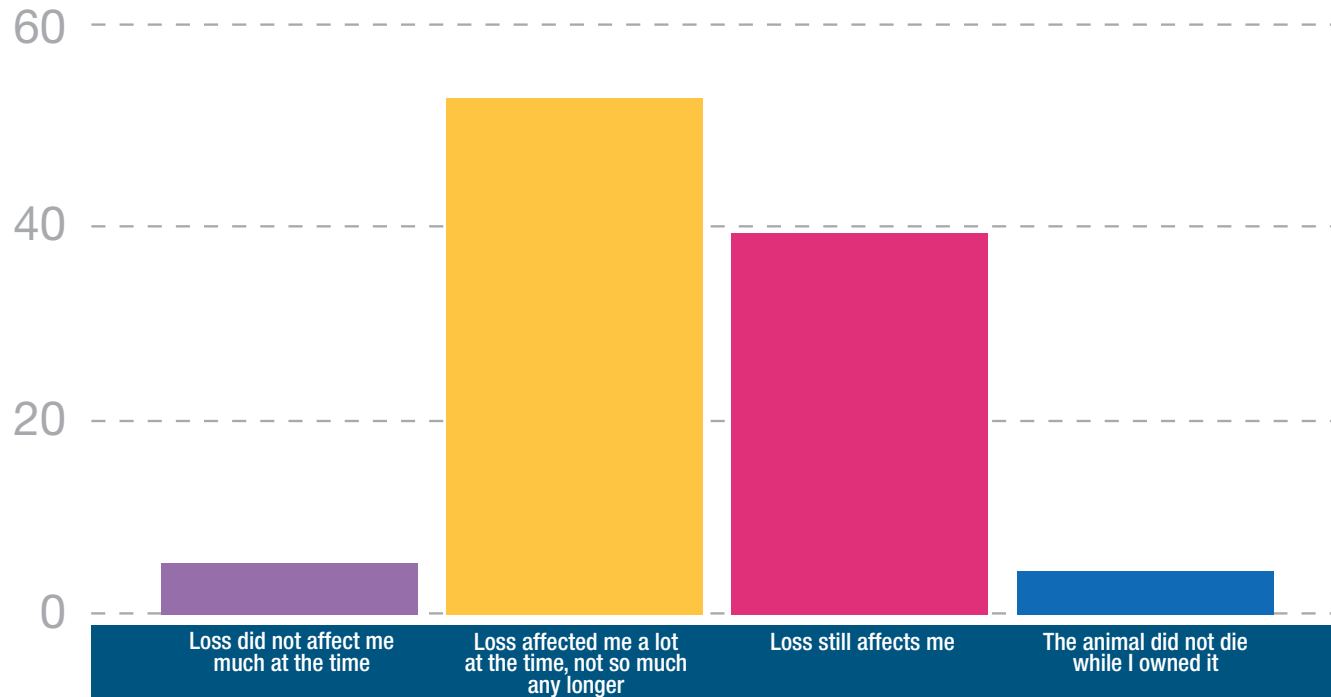
People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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If this animal died from injury, disease or old age, please tell us how the loss affected you.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Loss did not affect me much at the time	5.2%	14
Loss affected me a lot at the time, not so much later	52.6%	142
Loss still affects me	38.9%	105
The animal did not die while I owned it	4.4%	12

<i>answered question</i>	270
<i>skipped question</i>	24



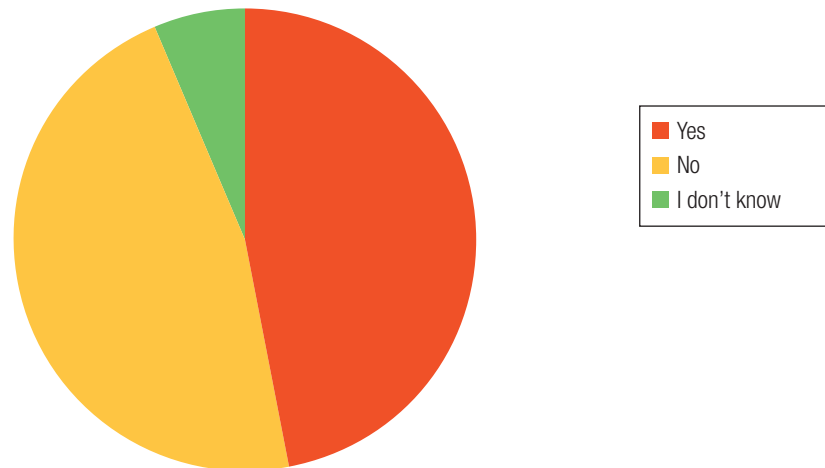
Question 9

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Was the animal euthanized?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	47.1%	121
No	46.7%	120
I don't know	6.2%	16
<i>answered question</i>		257
<i>skipped question</i>		37



Note: If participant answered yes, they skipped question 10.

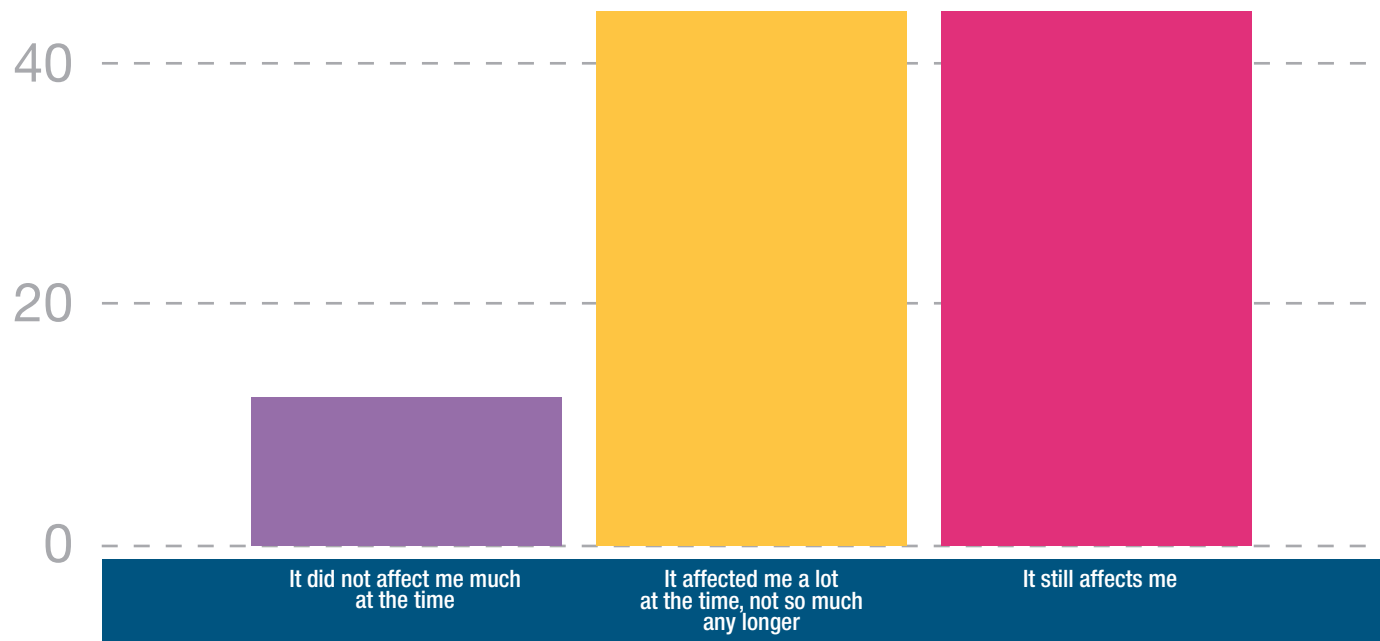
Question 10

People, Pets, and the World We Share:

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If this animal was given away, ran away, or you are not sure what happened to it, please tell us how the loss affected you.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It did not affect me much at the time	12.3%	10
It affected me a lot at the time, not so much any longer	44.4%	36
It still affects me	44.4%	36
<i>answered question</i>		81
<i>skipped question</i>		213



People, Pets, and the World We Share:

Studying the dramatic, lasting impact a pet has on a child



The Human-Animal Bond and its Impact on Children

Respondents were allowed to provide comments about the animal they selected for the survey. Comments were full of emotional stories about the childhood pet with many referring to the pet as a “sister or sibling,” confidant, protector, or best friend. Several respondents hoped that one day they might be reunited with their pet after death (often referred to as the rainbow bridge theme). Parents of respondents were often remembered with bitterness or fondness, depending on the parents’ involvement with the loss of a pet and/or how the parents helped the child’s pet in need. Some of the unedited comments selected below speak to a parent’s role in nurturing the human-animal bond, and a child’s ongoing feelings toward their parents as the result of nurturing a pet. We would encourage you to read all of the comments in the survey (found in the Appendix) as they speak loudly to the role that animals play in a child’s life. Below are several unedited quotations:

When I was a little kid, we had a bulldog. My mom wouldn’t let her come in the house. One winter, when it got really cold, I asked again, and she said no. “If you want to sleep with the dog, you go outside.” I sleep in the doghouse three nights before she finally relented and let me bring her in.

Selected Respondents' Comments (Unedited) continued

My mother insisted I take my dog to be euthanized, as she had the mange. I feel it was cruel to make me do this, and cruel to my dog, as well. I remember she gave me \$5 to give the man at the place, and he said, "Thank you" and I said "Go to hell." His little boy was standing there. I am now 72, and I still recall this cruelty.

...one day when I arrived home, my mother told me that that morning my Dad had taken "Lady" to the Humane Society to have her put to sleep (for barking)...I begged my mother, & my Dad...to bring "Lady" home before they euthanized her...I was so upset...I ABSOLUTELY COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT MY DAD, ACTUALLY, DID THAT...I have adopted many dogs over the yrs. I can not imagine a period of time when I would not be a "Dog Parent".

My parents put my dog to sleep while I was at summer camp. They did it to protect me. I would have preferred to say good bye. That was the real trauma. Death of a pet is sad but is part of life.

I was a lonely little girl, living with my father as my parents fought over my custody. This little dog was ALL I had at times, and she was taken away from me (I never was told where to) and I've never forgotten her, but I forgave my father. But it was traumatic.

...I had her for 16 years – she was my everything growing up as a child. However, my Mom explained to me that my dog's purpose had been fulfilled and I needed to allow my love to allow me to do the right thing. Very true – hated seeing my girl in pain on a daily basis. Always have a place in my heart for her.

Noel was our third cat. My dad found her along a deserted road at Christmas time. She lived to 20 or 23 years old and became very feeble, blind and deaf. As a college student I got a cat (Ophelia). During Noel's last day, she and Ophelia would go out in the yard and Ophelia would act as her "guide" cat...Ophelia lived to 18. She died 10 years ago and I'm still affected.

...I remember the details very clearly of his sudden illness, going to the vet, him being euthanized, and bringing him home to be buried ...I've always been thankful to my parent that the situation was handled with grace and dignity for our beloved Barney...

I was only 5 when we had to euthanize him due to cancer. My parents did not tell me until they brought him home to bury in our back yard. I can still remember sitting there bawling as we buried him ... that was 36 years ago I still think of him often!



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Conclusion

We hope that you will spend time reflecting on the results of this survey, and on the amazing role that animals play in the lives of children. In many cases, experiences with a childhood pet remain throughout a person's lifetime – which showcases the transformative power of the human-animal bond.

Animals in our lives help to create the social network which is a cornerstone for creating humane communities. American Humane Association will continue to celebrate the value of the child-animal bond as we have since 1877 with evidence-based research and compassionate solutions.

Please add any comments that you might like to share about this animal AND YOUR EXPERIENCE:

Answer Options

Response Count

145

answered question

145

skipped question

149

I wish I had the knowledge then re. dogs and their health that I have now.

I to this day call this dog my sister. She was only a few months older than I and she still influences my relationships with my pets today.

His name was Tiger, we would play for hours and take naps together. He was a mixed breed, not sure what though. He would always wait for me when I came home from school. When no friends were around, he was always there; everyday.

My dog Sam died of old age, we had him for over 16 years

My family had and loved many animals. My father gave me a beautiful Siamese kitty. Her name was Bootsie. She lived to be 18 years old. Although I have other 4 legged family members now, Bootsie will forever be in my heart.

My rabbit was older and was getting splayed legs. I did give him subq fluids for about two weeks but realized even though he seemed happy it wasn't the best for him.

Bootsie, a black, mixed-breed dog was probably my best friend when I was a young child. One morning she wasn't there any longer. My parents said she was tired and went to rest. I have kept photos of my sister, myself and Bootsie.

I'm 56, so when I was 3 I really don't remember. I lost one of my dachshunds 11 months ago and I am still crying over his loss

My mother insisted I take my dog to be euthanized, as she had the mange. I feel it was cruel to make me do this, and cruel to my dog, as well. I remember she gave me \$5 to give the man at the place, and he said, "Thank you," and I said "Go to hell." His little boy was standing there. I am now 72, and I still recall this cruelty.

I still think about and miss Mr. G and wonder what happened to him. I called for him and cried for weeks afterward. It still hurts as much as more recent dog losses of old age and health problems.

I have owned 5 dogs since childhood, and as of today we own 4 rescue cats, and feed 2 feral cats since we discovered them in a drainage area several months ago. We were trying to capture them to be neutered and then released if we cannot gain their trust. These are the last two of a litter of 4, the mother and the 2 other ones disappeared.

Caring for a pet showed me the power of compassion and unconditional love

Fuzzy was my best friend, confidant, friend and kid all rolled into one. She helped me grow up and never feel alone. I love and miss her greatly to this day. Wonderful memories abound.

I begged my parents to let me adopt a dog from the time I was 6 yrs old. Finally, when I was 12, they took me to the Miami (FL.) Humane Society (I was born & raised in Miami) for me to choose a puppy to adopt. - "Lady" was 8 wks old when we adopted her. She was a sweet sweet black & white terrier. -My grandparents lived with us, & though my grandmother absolutely didn't want me to have a dog (because she was afraid that a dog would dirty the house), my grandmother grew to love ""Lady"" within a month after we brought her ("Lady") home. -"Lady" was wonderful, I loved her so very much. She was my Buddy, I took her everywhere I could with me. We played all the time, I cleaned up the yard after her, bathed her, & took care of her when she was sick. -When I was 18 & was working full time & in college, my parents both were working, my grandmother had died, & my grandfather was weak, unsteady, & periodically left the burners on the stove turned on so we had to take him to live at an assisted living residence, Therefore, ""Lady"" was alone all day every weekday, & her response to this was loudly whining, howling, & barking which the neighbors complained about 1st to my parents then to the police. -We tried everything we could think of to keep "Lady" happy & feeling secure when we were all working & at college, -and I came up with new ideas for this every day. -But, one day when I arrived home, my mother told me that that morning my Dad had taken "Lady" to the Humane Society to have her put to sleep (this is still very very difficult to talk about), because we had tried everything we could think of & nothing had kept "Lady" from whining, howling, & barking whenever noone was home. -I begged my mother, & my Dad (who soon arrived home-from work), for us to hurry to the Humane Society to bring ""Lady" home before they euthinized her, but my Dad said that the procedure had been completed that morning. --I was so upset (beyond consoling), angry, -I can't even describe everything I felt. Plus, I ABSOLUTELY COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT MY DAD, ACTUALLY, DID THAT. -I am a 63 yr old disabled retired high school teacher. I have adopted many dogs over the yrs. I cannot imagine a period of time when I would not be a ""Dog Parent". We now have 2 Cocker Spaniels, "Ashley" & "Sasha" who are 9 1/2 & 10 yrs old. They are our furry children. I love them both more than they could imagine, though I'll always love & miss "Lady" & every dog I've parented throughout my lifetime. I do hope & pray that we will be united with all our pets in Heaven.

I was in elementary school at the time. My dog was elderly and had gotten sick. I came home from school one day and she was "gone". Never got to say goodbye. Now my dog is an integral part of my family.

My dog is my best friend then. Now I have more animal friends than people friend, because the more people I meet the more I like animals.

This was my first dog, and I loved him. He ran away and then got hit by a car. I was devastated. His name was Pepper. :-)

This cat followed me home from school...maybe it was because I was feeding him my leftover lunch. I was soooooo sad when he died....

My parents put my dog to sleep while I was at summer camp. They did it to protect me. I would have preferred to say good bye. That was the real trauma. Death of a pet is sad but is part of life.

My dog Stormy was there when I was brought home from the hospital & was by my side from that day on. He was my best friend, my protector, my playmate & my confidant. He died of old age when I was 11 yrs old & my memories of him have never & will never die..

Always best friends forever!

the dog had severe seizures and the vet said it was the right thing to do. She was an amazing dog. So loving and kind. Such a good friend. I'm still sad.

My Irish setter Casey, was in love w/ my dad. When my dad passed away, Casey would not come out of his dog house or eat for about 5 days, and passed away on the 6th day. He was a great family dog, hunter and retriever. I know he died of a broken heart @ the age of 12.

i had my cat domino from the time i was 13, when i moved out i left him with my mother because he was 18 years old in human years at the time and i didn't think it would be good to move him out of the home he lived in all his life and so i left him in my parents care and eventually he got sick and nobody in my parents house called me until after my cat had passed away and i'm still affected by it to this day because domino wasn't just a pet, he was my best friend and everytime i was sick he stayed with me, if i had a seizure (cause i have epilepsy) he stayed with me and then he'd follow me around the house to be sure i was safe, if i went online he'd lay on the desk by the computer, when i slept he'd sleep by my feet or by my side, he meant the world to me and nobody could ever replace him or what he meant to me, and these days i live with my fiancée and our 2 cats and i love our 2 cats jack and oz very dearly, however the memory of domino is still there and always will be and maybe his death affected me so much because i didn't get to say goodbye to him, i don't know, what i do know is he was my rock for 18 years and i was his and i will never forget him.

I married and moved overseas (to England where there is a 6 mo quarantine)- my cat stayed with my parents in the States and died a few years later. I felt the loss at the time, but I had accepted that it would happen that way so said my goodbyes when I left and was somewhat prepared for it. Still made me sad though.

I had several Boston Terriers growing up. They all died of old age except one, Mitzi was run over by a drunk old lady that lived across the street. My family mourned her loss for years. I am in my 40's now and I have three Bostons. One I rescued from a puppy mill. I believe we will have to answer someday for everything we do in this life even to how we treat animals. Blessings

I had many dogs and pets as a kid. I remember one dog in particular, Peaches, a toy poodle. I have a portrait of Peaches that hangs in my house today. I still miss that dog. I loved him very very much.

Adopted from friend and we were bonded from day one...She passed at 17 years + years..and she thought I was her feline mama...Bless her darling heart.

He was very cute very sweet hamster and I used to carry him in a pocket sometimes. He died during the night probably of old age.

I was a lonely little girl, living with my father as my parents fought over my custody. This little dog was ALL I had at times, and she was taken away from me (I never was told where to) and I've never forgotten her, but I forgave my father. But it was traumatic.

Lady, was my devoted guardian and friend and I have never had another dog like her.

My Lollipop was a beautiful calico/tabby mix and had such attitude when she was first rescued from the street. As the years passed she mellowed into a loving lap cat. She died of untreatable cancer at 16 years of age and it broke my heart. I love her still.

I think the reason that the loss didn't effect me too much was because she was old and in pain and had lived a happy life, so I knew euthanasia was the right answer. Also I was away at college at the time, so I didn't really have to deal with her loss, it would have been more difficult if I would have had to stare at an empty dog bed everyday.

I am a better pet owner than my parents because of the loss of our family pet. I also went into veterinary medicine and am active in animal welfare. I still remember how important our dog was to me and how they didn't believe in taking your dog to the vet.

My tomcat Tuxedo, Kittaboy, had to be put down due to infection and complications he suffered from injuries he received from a fight with another cat :(

Although I had several animals/pets while growing up, I chose to think about one of my first dogs. My parents already had him when I was born. We had to put him down when I was about 5 years old, and though I was really young, I remember the feeling of loss as I sat in a chair facing his bed crying for what seemed like hours when I was told he had died. He was my first experience with loving animals and so much a part of my early childhood. I loved him and still love him. I'm so thankful for having had these experiences while growing up--it's a huge part of who I am today. My animals are my family.

My animal was a dog that was dropped off at our drive. My parents kept him around as the family dog. We lived on 5 acres with horses. When i was young i would wonder the property doing my own thing. My mom always knew to look for that dog because then she would know where I was. He was always at my side. We had to put him down do to old age and the fact he had lost all control of his bowels. I was about 8 1/2 years old at the time. I have owned 4 dogs since. I love and have more compassion for animals than most humans. My animals always become my best friends/children!!!

Me and my horse Tiny Dancer were very close...I used to ride her bareback everywhere from teh time I was 8. I camped outside with her once when she hurt her leg.

He was the best, smartest dog anyone could ever ask for. He lived a great life, but eventually got old and was in more pain than we could stand to watch. We put him to sleep and burried him in the backyard. I still think about him a lot with fond memories and know we did the right thing.

I think it is so important for children to grow up with animals. That being said, I think if the parent is irresponsible in how they treat them then it will only perpetuate bad treatment of a pet.

was the most special pet i've ever had and i remember her often. it's a void no other pet has been able to fill. i remember her fondly and miss her greatly.

My parents were away and I had to make the decision. It made me see that putting an animal to sleep is a selfless act, it was what was best for her.

My cat was my rock growing up. Whenever I was sad and crying he would lay down next to me and comfort me. I lost him and my parents to a house fire when I was 19.

I grew up with Tigger. He died at the age of 17 from kidney failure, we had him humanely euthanized after weeks of dialysis. I will never forget him.

I add more than one, some died and some euthanized (because they were sick). I love love love animals!

he was 15 when she died since I have had 2 ASPCA dogs (both passed at ages 14 and 15) a stray still w me and a gift also still w me and new to my family 2 guinea pigs and Cheerios out pet mini pig

Giggles was PTS due to a degenerative muscle disease that made it impossible for her to know when to go to the bathroom. She also struggled to get up from a laying down position. She was on medication for pain management for many years before her quality of life was no longer something we could give her through continuing medications.

When I was a little kid, we had a bulldog. My mom wouldn't let her come in the house. One winter, when it got really cold, I asked again, and she said no. "If you want to sleep with the dog, you go outside." I sleep in the doghouse three nights before she finally relented and let me bring her in.

Bandit lived an amazingly long life and died of natural causes at an old age. He was highly intelligent and a feisty parakeet. He was good company for my parents when I left for college.

This particular animal was 17 or 18 years old when my family had him euthanized. I know it affected my parents a lot at the time because they were the ones he lived (I had moved away by that time) and they are the ones who had to make the decision. It didn't affect me as much, likely because I work in the animal welfare field and I was able to reconcile the fact that he's lived a long life, he was cared for, and that we were preventing the possibility of him suffering by having euthanized rather than waiting too long, as I've seen many times before in my work.

I do not think I will ever have another pet euthanized.

He became unable to stand without severe pain.

I was devastated at the reality of the time coming to put my sweet girl to rest. I had her for 16 years - she was my everything growing up as a child. However, my Mom explained to me that my dog's purpose had been fulfilled and I needed to allow my love to allow me to do the right thing. Very true - hated seeing my girl in pain on a daily basis. Always have a place in my heart for her.

He was kicked by my horse while chasing her. A broken rib his punctured lung. :(Still sad to think about, but no one's fault.

The dog died of natural causes at home while I was at college. My mother took care of him and was with him when he died.

It was 30 years ago, but it still saddens me. He was my best companion. I had only been out of college a few months & he was 14 y/o & very sick, in a coma. My parents felt it was best for me to make the decision to euthanize or wait for him to die. I agree with that, but it sure was a terrible intro to adult life. Thanks.

I was about 13. Our dog had a twisted intestine & had to be euthanized. It was an awful experience & I still remember my mother walking her out the door to go to the vet that last day we had her.

They are the best beings in the planet, much better than us so called humans

Trixie was one of many animals that we had when I was a child. She was my best friend and I truly loved her. We would go for walks and play all the time together. She lost an eye to one of our other dogs, but that made no difference to me. She was still my best friend. I truly miss her as well as all the animals I had after her. They all lived with me until they passed on from old age. I wish I could have more to grow up with but my landlord says no! Hopefully we can move soon because my husband and I have so much love to share with any animal we choose!

I raised peanut from a runt of the litter. She died of old age after I was married and had my first child. It took me over 17 years to get another dog. She was a part of my family and cannot be replaced but we did add another member by a rescue.

I've had dogs since I was a baby-- and their loss always affects me and still does. Our schnauzer Patches lived to be 19 and I had to take her to be euthanized. Our mixed breed Chingo had epilepsy and didn't live past 8-- and I always felt responsible for that. (even though I learned later it wasn't my fault). Pets have been and still are a huge part of my life and I can't imagine living in a house without at least 1 dog.

I grew up with the family dog and he was important in my development as a caring individual.

Noel was our third cat. My dad found her along a deserted road at Christmas time. She lived to 20 or 23 years old and became very feeble, blind and deaf. As a college student I got a cat (Ophelia). During Noel's last days she and Ophelia would go out in the yard and Ophelia would act as her "guide" cat. If Noel was walking too close to the driveway, etc. Ophelia would herd her back. Ophelia lived to 18. She died 10 years ago and I'm still affected.

Franzi was the best dog ever. He loved our whole family and took it upon himself to defend us from neighboring dogs, trains passing through the front yard, and any other perceived threat. When my siblings and I were outdoors, he was ever by our side, accompanying us on every ramble in the woods and up the creek to the mountain. Even after my father accidentally shot him (he recovered from this), his love never faltered. It has been 30 years since he died, and I still think of him often. I have never known a human with such capacity for love and devotion.

As a child, I was given a fox terrier. Less than a year later my parents took it away and had it put down as a burden or nuisance. I have had rescue dogs since and love them to the end!

Brande was old and had brain tumors, we had to put him to sleep. I will always have at least one dog.

This dog was my most intimate partner I told everything to as a child & teen. She was always there for me & nvr betrayed my trust. I was a victim of child abuse (severe beatings). When she died of cancer, it was my 1st experience of dealing w/death by someone I loved deeply. I believe every child should have that confidant & friend!!

This dog was my "furry sister."

Each of my pets holds a place in my heart and I can name each one from the time I was a toddler (I am 41 now).

That dog helped mold me into the person I am today. I feel rich in blessings for my deep connections to all animals.

This pet was about 14 years old, not eating, and xray revealed the belly area was filled with tumors. She was going to starve to death so the next morning we humanely euthanized her. I held and petted her head through the situation. She purred while she left this world.

My dog was a collie that I got as puppy and was my childhood companion - he lived to 13 years and was the most wonderful dog. I have had many dogs and cats since then - all rescued from shelters.

Our chihuahua died on Christmas Day. There is never a Christmas that passes that I don't remember waking up to find she had crossed the Rainbow Bridge.

Our Cat ran away, she was very old. I loved her as a child, but wasn't very close to her. She was my Mom's cat, and when my Mom passed away I got Princess back. I am not much of a cat person. Now I have 3 pugs, and they are my children, I adore them beyond any words could type. If I lost them, or they died I would have to be put on a Psych. Floor, my world would crumble. They are my family.

Euthanized due to extreme old age--couldn't stand up any longer.

My cat was my best friend and I loved her as if she was a human member of my family. She was 19 yrs when her organs started shutting down and I had to make the hard decision to put her to sleep. I still think about her all the time. Her and I had a connection that was so deep. I had gotten her when I was around 5 yrs old as a kitten. She was amazing.

The bond between a person and her pet is HUGE! Getting the unconditional love from another living thing is soo important!

My collie died of cancer, we should have put her down but we couldn't part with her, she died while we weren't home. I found her. I was 16. She was my best friend, my dad brought her home when I was 4... still miss her but know she is somehow still with me.

I loved him so much. Still think about him.

Had a per skunk as a child was given to my family to take care of. it was friendly and swet and it had be d fumed.

She was a German shepherd named Shadow. We got her as a puppy when I was 10. When I was 12, I helped deliver her litter of puppies. She was my best friend and protector. ANY child could come into our house or yard to play and Shadow loved them all. She was not trained for it, but when you put the leash on her, she became a different dog. . . like a working dog. While she was on the leash, no one could come up to me. She was very protective. My best friend, Janice, was an only child and not allowed to have a pet. She was always at my house to play and spend the night. Her parents came frequently to our home to play cards with my parents. Shadow knew both of Janice's parents very well and they could walk into our house at any time. One day, Janice and I were out walking Shadow and Janice's father was walking down the street, coming towards us. Shadow would not let him get within 10 feet of us. As far as Shadow was concerned, she was working and no one was coming near us while she was on the leash. I came home from work one day and found my mom on the floor holding Shadow in her arms. Shadow was 13 at the time. She had had a stroke while we weren't home and my mom found her when she arrived home from work. Shadow passed away within minutes of my mom holding her. It seemed like she was holding on just long enough to say goodbye. It took our family a long time to get over her lose. It's been many years, but we still talk about Shadow and all the funny things she did. She was an amazing dog and the best family member we could have asked for.

Ginger was my second dog...she came into my life as a puppy when the dog I had known since birth (Heather) passed away when I was 8. Ginger and I immediately bonded and were nearly inseparable. I still have memories and sadness when I think of her.

This animal loved for 18 years and she got me through some hard teen age yeas. she died of natural causes

She was a great dog and a blessing to my life. I have had dogs since her and cannot imagine not sharing my life with a dog.

I've always had dogs. The dog I answered this over was 14 months younger than me and we also had his mom and dad. I named him TeeWow. He was a Shep, Malmute, Collie, Wolf mix, I remember him pulling me in sleds, playing in the snow, being very protective of me. One day along with a chi mix they were both gone. I was in about 3rd grade, I was told the old story they went to a farm. As I got older, knowing my parents I'm sure Animal Control took them away. I'll never forget this, and as I still have dogs and cats they are never left with strangers when they get old or sick. When the time comes as it has many times since TeeWow and Peanut, I stay with my best friends and hold and comfort them while they pass onto the Rainbow Bridge.

Christie had cancer but lived to be 17 years old. She was a beautiful calico. We did have to euthanize her and I did not handle it well. I was 23 and had her since I was 6.

She was a yellow lab and as an adult I have two labs. It is the only animal I will ever have based on what I remember from Brandy. I loved that dog more than life itself and losing her affects me to this day.

As a family we had several pets...they were always rescues...my st Bernard Shepard mix died of rectal cancer...she did not live very long about 3 years...we had her euthanized when she was experiencing extreme discomfort. I was so heartbroken because to me she was the prettiest dog I had ever seen. I was 8 when I got her. I remember burying her under my favorite dogwood tree in a clearing where I would go to read. Until I left home for college I would head down to that tree about 1 a month...and for me it we a happy place, not a sad one. After I left for college...I've only been to that spot 2 or 3 times (over about 12 yrs)...but I currently have two rescues and I must say I think getting a new pet helped me get over my Beauty dying.

When I was 11, the stray German Shepherd that 'adopted us' feel ill to cancer. I remember the details very clearly of his sudden illness, going to the vet, him being euthanized, and bringing him home to be buried; however, it wasn't until much later that I realized I didn't quite understand at the time - I just knew that he was my friend, he got very sick, but that he wasn't hurting anymore and went to heaven. I've always been thankful to my parents that the situation was handled with grace and dignity for our beloved Barney, and I believe the experience allowed me to understand compassion for animals. Many pets and many years later, I am a volunteer at the local SPCA, helping the discarded, abandoned, and homeless animals. I know in my heart my earliest experiences with animals have put me on the path to helping as many of them as I can.

The dog was a collie shepherd. We adopted him as a puppy. I remember picking him out of a litter in someones back yard. He was in a pen, and so fuzzy~a fat baby just beginning to walk. He had a white collar around his neck and was tri collar. A medium sized dog, like a border collie. He would find his way to our grandparents home when my brother and I would spend the night...he would be there in the morning, and my grandpa would say "look who's here", and he would be sleeping on the backporch and so happy to see us when we arose. It was about 3 miles from our home that he would travel to be with us. In the 1950's, obviously he was not restrained. He ran the neighborhood, but stayed close to home when we were there. He followed us as we left home in our car with our parents one night and was hit by a car. We didn't know where he was when we returned. I was so upset and missing him. He evidently crawled to a womans home and fell into her basement thru a window after being injured. She found him in her basement. He had tags with our number on his collar, so she called to say he had died there in her home. We had been missing him for a couple of days. He was a human dog~a super dog, and one that I loved dearly. My best pal before the age of 10. I have had and met many other great dogs. I have a lab shepherd now who is at the top of the list, but I won't ever forget Buster.

I know it might sound strange, but I find it harder to see an animal pass away, than a human.

She gave is a lot of fun and an understanding of responsibility.

Old age. 19yo. To prevent her suffering.

He was very sick had FIV

I still think about him almost everyday, but I'm not racked with grief anymore. I now have another dog that I love whole heartedly. I can't imagine life without a dog. It's not a home without a dog!

I was only 5 when we had to euthanize him due to cancer. My parents did not tell me until they brought him home to bury in our back yard. I can still remember sitting there bawling as we buried him...that was 36 years ago & I still think of him often!

When I was young my parents divorced and they took my dog out to a relative's ranch. She kept running away and was eventually injured so badly she had to be euthanized. It haunts me to this day she felt abandoned and there was nothing I could do about it.

only child with older parents- my pets were my siblings.

It's never easy saying good bye to your best friend yu never forget them now matter how much time passes.

Having a pet as a child brings so much joy, and is also a learning experience. The loss of my dog was my first experience with a death, and very heartbreaking. It took awhile before I wanted a dog again, because I didnt want to experience that pain, but they bring so much joy into our lives, that we eventually got another dog.... And then another.... lol But, as an adult, I was hesitant to get a dog, because I didnt want my daughter to feel that pain, but of course we got one. It takes a long time, for the pain to go away when your beloved pet is gone.

Charlie was the most wonderful dog in my life. I hope to see him again one day.

My family adopted Phoebe from the shelter. We had her about 12 years. She grew a tumor and started going downhill. We put her to sleep and it was devastating for me but I knew we had done the right thing. I still miss her and think about her all the time.

The dog I had, a dachshund named Hannibal Hector, died of a blood disease that I believe was caused by over vaccination and monthly doses of toxins for heartworm and fleas that he did not need. They compromised his immune system and he died a horrible, violent death that I was lucky enough to not be around to see. I was taking finals in college at the time and he was home with my parents. While I hate that he died like that, it taught me to explore natural rearing for my dogs. I now have two very happy, healthy dogs that receive none of those toxins, and they are vibrant and glowing with health.

Our little Boston Terrier began having siezures and heart problems. He was helped to Heaven by the vet.

he was my best friend, steady companion, and my comfort. He was also a great playmate, and always there for me.

I've had many pets as a kid. Each one touched my life in some way and I still think of them all to this day!

It's tramatizing for a child to see a pet taken away to be put down. They always think about it.

diead of old age

That was a LONG time ago, and I have lived with and lost many more dogs since then as an adult; THEIR loss still affects me deeply

My animal companion so enriched my life.

My pets are also a part of my family, therefore their loss is felt deeply. My dog disappeared (lived bordering forest land) and I spent months searching for him. I still have his picture to this day and still am haunted. He was devoted to me and me to hiim.

My poor kitty, Beijing, died at the vet after suffering from a blood clot that stopped the flow of blood to his back legs. I still think about that special, crazy cat!

Louie was a great dog and he was my first love. I was out of state when he died, I cried for weeks and there is still a hole in my heart.

Sniffy was the first of many dogs for me. Every time I lose a dog I feel like a whole has been torn out of me. Only time can heal the loss of a pet. Even then it tugs on my heart strings.

Max lived a long life and died at my parent's home. My life is now filled with all the animals i want.

My childhood cat lived to be 22 years old. I still remember her fondly and keep pictures of her around the house. She was a wonderful pet.

always had dogs. First English Bull died when I was 13 of a heart attack. I am 72 and still grieving the loss of my choc. Lab 1 yr ago, who died in his sleep at home of Kidney Failure. Lost a Newfoundland in 2001 of Brain Tumor. Always devastated when they GO.

SINCE THIS WAS MANY YEARS AGO, MY BROTHER BOUGHT A LITTLE CASKET AND SHE WAS BURIED BEHIND THE VET'S OFFICE, HER NAME WAS MITZI AND I NOW HAVE ANOTHER DOG I NAMED MITZI.

my dog was my role model, I patterned my life after this dog.

was the best dog ever

The passing of our family dog taught me to realize that life is a precious gift. It is not one to be taken for granted. As a child we all think our loved ones will be with us forever. Since the passing of our family dog which was a pitbull there have been many communities wanting to ban the breed. This makes me crazy because this is a typical American Response. let's ban the breed which used to be the number one fmaily dog in America instead of having more education and harsher penalties for those who engage in such activites as dog fighting. Ban Pits and they'll move to Rotts. Ban Rotts and they move to Shepards. Ban Shepards and.....

I can't remember how my first dog died. I was pretty young. Others were hit by cars, which affected me a great deal. My dogs are never off leash or running loose. My gardener knows I would fire him in a second if he let them out by leaving a gate open!

I have had quite a few animals in my lifetime. But dogs have my heart. I was with most of them when they died and I miss every one of them still today. I have a dog now that is going to be 12, and I dread the day she dies. But I will always be with them when they died. I want the last thing they see before going to heaven is my eyes and my love for them, not matter how much my heart breaks.

I have learned over the years that my kitties are house cats. It is often a cruel world for many defenseless animals outside. When people bring animals into their homes, the animals become members of their families and should be treated as such.

My parents moved and they made me leave my dog behind and it was lost my caretaker.

mY SWEET DOG DIED FIGHTING ANOTHER DOG TO PROTECT ME WHEN I WAS A CHILD

Having a pet as a child was very important for me. It was the foundation for being the animal lover that I am today! I will ALWAYS have animals in my life, wouldn't have it any other way.

My animals are my family - I mourn each of their losses. Some more than others - Can't imagine my life w/o a dog ! Gets me up and out everyday !

He was a goat and his name was charlie brown. He did of old age. I had never gotten another goat till recently. Now I have 4 and love them dearly.

In my heart forever! See them on Heaven

I had this cat as a child he died of old age at the ripe age of 15. I still think of him to this day. Have had many other pets but you always remember the first.

To me, losing a pet is no different than losing a relative or friend. They become a part of your family, and although they can't communicate in forms of human language, the love and the bond that is created cannot be denied. I've had to deal with the loss of two pets in my life and just like the death of a loved one, I grieved and still think about the time we had often.

I had my baby Tinkerbell for 14 years. She was very old and sick when she passed away and to this day I still miss her very very much.

I didn't have a happy childhood and this dog and my horse were really all I had.

Pansy, my semi-long haired Calico cat was my companion, friend from late childhood to the time I was married. She would not live with my husband & myself after I had moved away & returned back to my old neighborhood being married & finished with college work. I tried to keep Pansy at our new home knowing our long-lived attachment & loyal friends, but she always went back to my parents home three blocks away. Throughout, Pansy slept on my bed when I was growing up, had her first litter of kittens on my pillow, stayed next to me when I studied throughout school years including college. Hung out in a quiet spot watching me when I had friends over. She was a beloved cat and I still miss her. I never knew how she died--I sort of felt my mother unknowingly drove off with her on the car and something tragic happened and I was not to be informed. As history, Pansy would lay on the car if it was warmed by the summer sun. She was old, but always a constant element of my life. Her secret spot to lie was behind the davenport. My doleful & humorous memory was she ate my best friend's parakeet when we thought we would breed our birds for baby parakeets. Pansy cleverly left us a pile of feathers in the middle of the sunporch as a overt sign that she was inevitably a hunter, despite her loving feline nature.

The pet was lost due to an accident. I know it was only a little parakeet, but he was smart and friendly. I always felt his pain and still prefer not thinking about his end.

The dog was a family dog and was an outside dog only, so I did grieve somewhat when he died, but was not as extremely close to it as I became to my other animals when I became an adult. My animals became extremely close to me as an adult and I love(d) them dearly and grieved a great deal when I lost them but continue to have several fur babies in my household today.

He was in my brothers care and we still don't know what happen to him. I will always wonder what happen if he was scared and along it someone was giving him comfort. My animals are my babies!

pets are absolutely wonderful. They give unending undying love and devotion. They have such a special place in my heart that nothing else could fill.

My cat was 18 years old, had cancer and was in a lot of pain.

As a high schooler, I felt as though I was killing my dog by putting her to sleep but now looking back I know I was taking the hurt away that she was suffering from. Still hurts to this day though.

Having a pet as a child and being given the responsibility of caring for a creature that was dependent on it's humans left me with a life long love of all animals and sympathy for those creatures that have been neglected or abused.

Missy was there when I was born and she thought I belonged to her and was my guardian

I had 2 cats as a small child that disappeared. I also had cats that died and each one affected me at the time and still does. Each cat was different and holds a different memory for me.

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