



Gold Coast palliative care vet Dr Jackie Campbell and a patient, Luna.

## PETS FEEL GRIEF FOR LOST PALS: EXPERTS

### LAURA NELSON

IT'S not only humans who struggle with grief. Experts say pets can be so devastated by the death of a "sibling" pet, they can die of a broken heart.

Tom Jorgensen, founder of Pet Angel Funerals – the largest pet cremation service on the Gold Coast – says he often has cases in which pets that have grown up together die of natural causes within days of each other.

And local palliative care vet Dr Jackie Campbell says it is not unusual for animals to show signs of grief and distress for months after the loss of another pet.

Mr Jorgensen said when a remaining pet died, the two were often cremated together.

"I can't help but think the second pet dies from the stress of no longer having his or her mate around," he said.

"Some Gold Coasters even make the hard decision to euthanase the remaining pet if it's a similar age and also in ill health. This allows the animals to be farewelled as a pair."

Mr Jorgensen said the bond between pets that lived together was as close as the bond with their owners.

"A dog, cat or llama – they grieve just the same," he said. "They do everything together, so their whole world changes when their partner is gone."

Dr Campbell said: "There is plenty of behavioural evidence of grief in animals. Just like with people, grief manifests itself differently in each pet and signs of distress may last for up to six months."

Dr Campbell said common signs of grief in animals included changes in appetite, sleeping more, seeking out the deceased's favourite spot, and personality changes such as increased neediness or aggression.

"Occasionally, vets have to step in and try to guide them through it with behavioural training and in some cases, medication," she said.

To identify signs of grief in your pet and how to help them through it, visit [petangel.com.au/pets-grieving-the-loss-of-other-pets/](http://petangel.com.au/pets-grieving-the-loss-of-other-pets/).