



Lisa Leraas, class of 2001, and her cat, Jacob.

**Pet Loss Support Hotline volunteer  
Lisa Leraas**

Most people call the hotline because they want to talk to a friendly listener. Many callers are pleased when I tell them that I am a veterinary student, because they know that I understand what it feels like to care deeply about animals.

After talking to many people about their grief over the loss of a pet, I now have confidence in discussing difficult emotional issues. By staffing the hotline, I can also share my appreciation of the power of the special human-animal bond.

## *The Pet Loss Support Hotline*

*Services and referrals are free of charge. Call (800) 565-1526 or (530) 752-4200  
6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. (PST), Monday-Friday (Tu-Th during summer).*

*Call us. We understand the strong feelings people  
can have for animals. We have them, too.*

**Pet Loss Support Hotline volunteer  
Karen Sueda**

For many callers, their pet is their child and their closest friend rolled into one. It doesn't matter what species—I've had calls about dogs, cats, horses, rabbits and even a wild goose.

Some of the most memorable calls are the ones in which I answer the phone and all I hear is crying. My heart just breaks because I can only imagine the kind of pain these owners are feeling. I usually tell them to take all the time they need—I'm there to listen.

The majority of the callers I speak with tell me they don't have anyone they feel comfortable talking to about how devastated they feel after losing their companion. I often hear, "My friends/family don't understand why I'm so upset over the death of an animal." Some have told me that they want to talk about their pet, but feel that everyone they know is fed up hearing about the pet. Just speaking to someone who understands why they feel such pain and loneliness helps a lot of callers.

Some people have a difficult time *before* their pet's passing. Parents call asking how to prepare their children for the death of the family's elderly pet. Some have difficulty dealing with a euthanasia decision. I try to provide a sounding board for their fears and worries, and to present options they may not have considered.

One of the best things I've learned from the hotline is how to listen. I encourage callers to tell me stories about their pets. The opportunity to share wonderful memories is a special way of memorializing their beloved animal.



Karen Sueda, class of 2001, with her pet mouse, Tipper.