

MEDIA RELEASE

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Research shows the death of a pet can be as heartbreaking as a death in the family Dr Katrina Warren establishes new web resource for pet lovers

When Toby the Wonderdog, one of Australia's favourite dogs and the constant companion of television veterinarian, Dr Katrina Warren, passed away earlier this year, the outpouring of grief from his devoted fans overwhelmed Katrina – and inspired her to create a new web-based resource to help pet lovers during the difficult times when a pet's life ends through illness, expected or sudden death.

“There are no words that can really describe the intense grief I felt when Toby died. He truly was my best friend and loyal companion. He had been with me throughout my career, had travelled with me and stuck by me through the ups and downs of relationships. In fact, one of the first words my daughter spoke was Toby,” says Katrina.

“Having supported others through this grief, I knew it was going to be hard but I don't think I expected so many others to share my grief, and to need to talk about their own experiences. It felt like there was a huge sadness people were carrying around about the passing of their pets and Toby's death was one way they could talk about it.”

When Katrina read an article on British research which reported that a third of dog and cat owners said the death of their pet was as heartbreaking as the death of a parent, sibling or spouse¹ she knew that people needed more than just time to get used to life without their pet by their side.

“Partly to help me manage my own sadness, but also to help others, I set up a Toby the Wonderdog page on Facebook. I was absolutely inundated by a stream of emails and messages of support from fellow pet lovers.

¹ Research by insurance firm MORE THAN, reported in www.dailymail.co.uk 18 March 2010

“Sharing stories and photos on the Toby the Wonderdog Facebook page has helped me get through the first six months and it has reminded me that there is a huge community of people who are experiencing the overwhelming sadness of a pet’s death. What it also made me realise is that there is a lack of support and information for those living with this pain,” says Katrina.

This inspired her to develop the new interactive website www.ourwonderfulpets.com which provides support to grieving pet owners and celebrates the lives of our pets. The site’s main focus is on acknowledging and respecting the deep love that people have for their pets.

The site provides strategies for people with a critically ill pet, as well as those dealing with the expected or sudden death of a pet. It encourages people to post their own stories about their pets and interact with others on the site. There is also resource information as well as links to professional assistance for those who want additional support.

Katrina says that although she feels she lost a little piece of her heart when Toby died, the process of establishing www.ourwonderfulpets.com has helped her to focus on all the wonderful memories and live with the loss of her best friend.

(ENDS)