

## Helping Pets Cope with Depression

Would it surprise you to learn that, just like people, pets can suffer from depression? In fact, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are currently dealing with depression. Some signs to look for include the following: pets might change their behavior and start moping around or become lethargic; they may no longer want to play. In severe cases, pets can even stop eating or drinking water, leading to drastic weight loss. This is painful for both pet and owner. So why do pets get depressed? That depends on the pet. Just like people, pets have unique circumstances and psychologies, and it can be difficult to isolate the cause of depression. Often, depression results from a confluence of factors. In sort, there are a variety of reasons, but here are some common triggers: \* The family's children leave for school \* During the day, there is no playmate in the empty house \* A death and its resulting grief \* Loss of a playmate \* Physiological disorders (chemical imbalances) \* Relocations or dramatic scenery changes If you notice any of the aforementioned signs of depression in your pet, take him to your vet immediately. Think back over your life recently: have any of the trigger events happened to you or your pet? If you think you can pinpoint the cause, this will help to determine a course of treatment. You and your veterinarian can talk about some possible ways to help your pet overcome his depression. Some of these therapies include: \* Medication, like anti-depressant drugs \* Play dates with other animals in the neighborhood. It's amazing how powerful the simple company of another animal can be, so if you can, arrange to meet another local pet owner regularly. \* Plenty of exercise. \* Hiking in the woods, both for its exercise and moral boost. \* Doggy daycare, which provides valuable social time for your pet. \* Short goodbyes. If you keep your farewells simple when you leave, your dog will think you're leaving for a short time. \* Familiar objects. Try leaving a "comfort object" with your pet when you're gone. \* Natural remedies. Homeopathic solutions like PetCalm or PetAlive can help soothe your pet's nerves. Of course, these are only a few options. Pets are integral parts of their owners' families and lives, and when they are depressed, it affects everyone. Look for signs and don't want to respond; your pet's health may be on the line.

## About the Author

Ian Spellfield, an occasionally frustrated pet owner, tests and reviews cat urine removal products at his blog Urine Off Reviews. You can follow his reviews and occasional heartache at <http://www.urineoffreviews.com>

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