

**RESOLUTION #6—2024  
Regular Winter Session**

Submitted by  
Board of Directors

**REVISED POLICY ON ANIMAL LOSS SUPPORT SERVICES**

**RESOLVED** that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) House of Delegates adopt the policy on Animal Loss Support Services as noted below which will supersede and replace in its entirety the current policy on Guidelines for Pet Loss Support Services ([Attachment 1](#)).

**Animal Loss Support Services**

The AVMA recognizes that people can experience significant stress during an animal's end-of-life transition and death, whether the animal is a companion, research, zoo, or agricultural animal. The grief and emotions that occur during this time can be similar to that experienced by people who have lost a family member or close friend. The AVMA recognizes the benefits of mental health support services (e.g., pet loss support) for these individuals. Veterinary professionals should be familiar with resources and services on grief and loss and share information as needed. While expression of empathy and support are encouraged, formal mental health services should be provided by appropriately trained mental health professionals.

**Statement about the Resolution**

The policy, AVMA Guidelines for Pet Loss Support Services, was considered by the Steering Committee on Human-Animal Interactions (SCHAI) during their October in-person meeting. Its content related to best practices for pet loss helplines was deemed no longer relevant because these programs are now regularly offered by national organizations and the internet has proved to be an appropriate platform for some of these services. However, the SCHAI agreed that AVMA's backing of support services for people anticipating or dealing with the loss of animals remains critical. Therefore, rather than rescinding the policy, SCHAI is recommending revisions that remove content regarding telephone helplines and, instead, focus more directly on resources for addressing animal loss. Because people affected by animal loss cross all sectors of veterinary medicine and include producers, research technicians, and zookeepers, as well as pet owners, the policy's scope was expanded from 'pet' to 'animal'. The SCHAI believes it is important for AVMA to continue its efforts addressing the psychological impacts of humane endings and believes this revised policy supports those initiatives.

**Financial Impact: None**

	<b>Board of Directors</b>	<b>House Advisory Committee</b>	<b>Reference Committee #</b>	<b>House of Delegates</b>
<b>Recommend Approval</b>	X	X	X (amended as noted below*)	X (amended as noted below*)
<b>Recommend Disapproval</b>				
<b>Recommend Referral to...</b>				
<b>No Recommendation</b>				
<b>Recommend Postpone Indefinitely</b>				

(use this space for additional narrative, if needed)

**\*Revised Policy on Animal Loss Support Services**

Insert the word “wild,” after “zoo”, so it reads “whether the animal is a companion, research, zoo, wild, or agricultural animal.”