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What Happens to Pets When Couples Break Up?

When humans separate or divorce, it means big changes for pets, too. You're all going through a difficult time, but Fluffy doesn't understand, can't ask questions and still loves you both as much as ever. Let doing what's best for puss or pooch be something you and your soon-to-be-ex agree on.

When Beagles get legal

In the eyes of the law, pets are property. If a custody battle goes to court, the pet is usually awarded to whoever had her first or pays her bills, with no regard for who contributes what toward the daily physical and emotional needs of the pet. It's up to pet parents to come together and figure out how to co-parent their fur-babies.

Do's and don'ts

Consider how much change your pet can handle. An energetic dog may adjust well to moving back and forth between two homes, whereas an elderly cat may need one stable environment. Beware of using treats or table food as consolation, that will only cause tummy troubles and weight gain. And if Fluffy wasn't allowed on the furniture when you were together, she shouldn't be now that you're apart. Mixed messages only cause more stress for your pet.

Getting from here to there

Dogs and cats are sensitive to loss and change in their environment. An otherwise cheerful and well-behaved pet may become depressed or act out. It's important to remember that it's not the animal's fault. Be patient and loving as you all adjust to new living arrangements.

While going through this difficult transition, try to acknowledge the love each of you has for your pet. Working together for the well-being of a four-legged loved one might even help an ex-couple remain friends—for Fluffy's sake!