for not recognizing the illness earlier, for not doing something sooner, for not being able to afford other types of or further treatment, for making the decision for euthanasia, or for being careless and allowing your horse to be injured. It is common for owners to feel doubt over whether they have made the right decision.

Depression is also a common experience after the death of a special animal. You may feel profound sadness, loss of energy, isolation and loneliness. It might be hard to get out of bed in the morning, especially if your morning routine involved caring for your horse’s needs. If you are suffering from profound or prolonged depression, seek professional assistance.

Eventually, you will begin to accept your horse’s death. You will be able to remember your horse and your time with them without feeling the intense grief and emotional pain you previously felt. Acceptance and resolution do not mean that you no longer feel a sense of loss, just that you have come to terms with the fact that your horse has died, and appreciate the time you had together and the personal growth you gained from the relationship with them.

Even when you have reached resolution and acceptance, however, negative feelings and depression may reappear. If this does happen, these feelings will usually be less intense, and with time they will be replaced with fond memories. Although everyone who shared a bond with an animal experiences some kind of grief, grieving is always a very personal process and every experience of loss is different. Family and friends should be reassured that sorrow and grief are normal and natural responses to death.

If you or a family member have great difficulty in accepting your horse’s death and cannot resolve feelings of grief and sorrow, you may want to discuss these feelings with a person who is trained to understand the grieving process and can support and help you as you mourn your loss. Your veterinarian certainly understands the relationship you have lost and may be able to suggest support groups and hot lines, grief counselors, clergymen, social workers, or psychologists who can help.

REMEMBERING YOUR HORSE
The period from birth to old age is much shorter for domestic animals than for people, and death is a normal part of the lifecycle. It cannot be avoided, but understanding and compassion can help you, your family, and your friends manage the grief associated with it.
For some people, a memorial service or ritual can be therapeutic. You may choose to keep and display reminders of your horse, such as photos or mementos or anything that helps you recall and treasure the good times you spent with your beloved companion. You may also wish to make a memorial contribution to a charity in honor of your horse and the deep bond you shared. Just as the grieving process varies from person to person, so does the method of remembering the animal that shared your life.

SHOULD I GET ANOTHER HORSE?
Some people may feel they would never want another horse, while others may recover from their loss more quickly with a new horse in the family. Just as grief is a personal experience, the decision of when, if ever, to bring a new horse into your life is a personal one. Family members should agree on the appropriate time to bring a new horse into their lives. Although you can never replace the horse you lost, you can find another to share your life.
HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN?
Asking yourself the following questions can ease the decision-making process:
• Does your horse have more “bad days” than “good days”?
• Is your horse suffering?
• Is the condition incurable?
• What are the chances that your horse will recover from its condition? How long will your horse be debilitated or in pain?
• Does your horse still seem interested in its surroundings and in its normal behaviors, or does it seem consistently depressed or unresponsive?
• Will your horse require special care that you cannot provide or afford?
• Is your horse a danger to itself or to the people who handle it?
Your veterinarian understands your bond with your horse and can examine and evaluate your horse’s condition, estimate its chances for recovery, and discuss any potential disabilities, special needs and long-term problems. He or she can explain medical and surgical options as well as risks and possible outcomes. Because your veterinarian cannot make the euthanasia decision for you, you need to understand your horse’s condition. If there is any part of the diagnosis or the possible effects on your horse’s future that you don’t understand, ask questions that will help you understand. Although there are times when the decision needs to be made immediately, you usually will have some time to review the facts and discuss it with your family and friends before making the decision.

WHAT IF THE HORSE IS HEALTHY?
If your horse has become dangerous, unmanageable, unseviceable, or difficult to maintain, euthanasia may be necessary. Some undesirable and abnormal behaviors can be modified, so it is important to discuss these situations with your veterinarian. Your safety and your family’s safety should always be taken into consideration.

HOW CAN I SAY GOODBYE?
The act of saying goodbye is an important step in managing the natural and healthy feelings of grief and sorrow following the loss of a beloved friend and companion. Once the euthanasia decision has been made, you and other family members may want to say goodbye to your horse. Some horse owners choose to be present when their horses are euthanized, but others choose to say goodbye beforehand and not be present during euthanasia. This is a very personal decision and you should do what feels right for you. Do not let others pressure you into making a choice that makes you uncomfortable.

HOW CAN I FACE THE LOSS?
After your horse has died, it is natural and normal to feel grief and sorrow. The grieving process includes accepting the reality of your loss, accepting that the loss and accompanying feelings are painful, and adjusting to your new life that no longer includes your horse. Sometimes well-meaning family and friends may not realize how important your horse was to you or the intensity of your grief. Comments they make may seem cruel and uncaring although they were not meant to be taken that way. Be honest with yourself and others about how you feel. Talk about your sorrow, but also about the fun times you spent with your horse, the activities you enjoyed, and the memories that are meaningful to you. If you feel despair or severely depressed, talk to a mental health professional.

THE GRIEVING PROCESS
The loss of a horse can be a very stressful life event. Everyone experiences grief differently and may go through periods of feeling different emotions such as denial, sadness, anger, anxiety, numbness, and guilt. The grief can be delayed and may be brought on more intensely by other losses. The grief may seem overwhelming at times. Some of these feelings may relate to how your horse died. For example, you may feel guilty or blame others...