

Natural HORSE

M A G A Z I N E

Mind matters:

Recognizing and Treating
Equine BURNOUT

EQUINE POSTURE:

Where Does YOUR
Horse Stand?

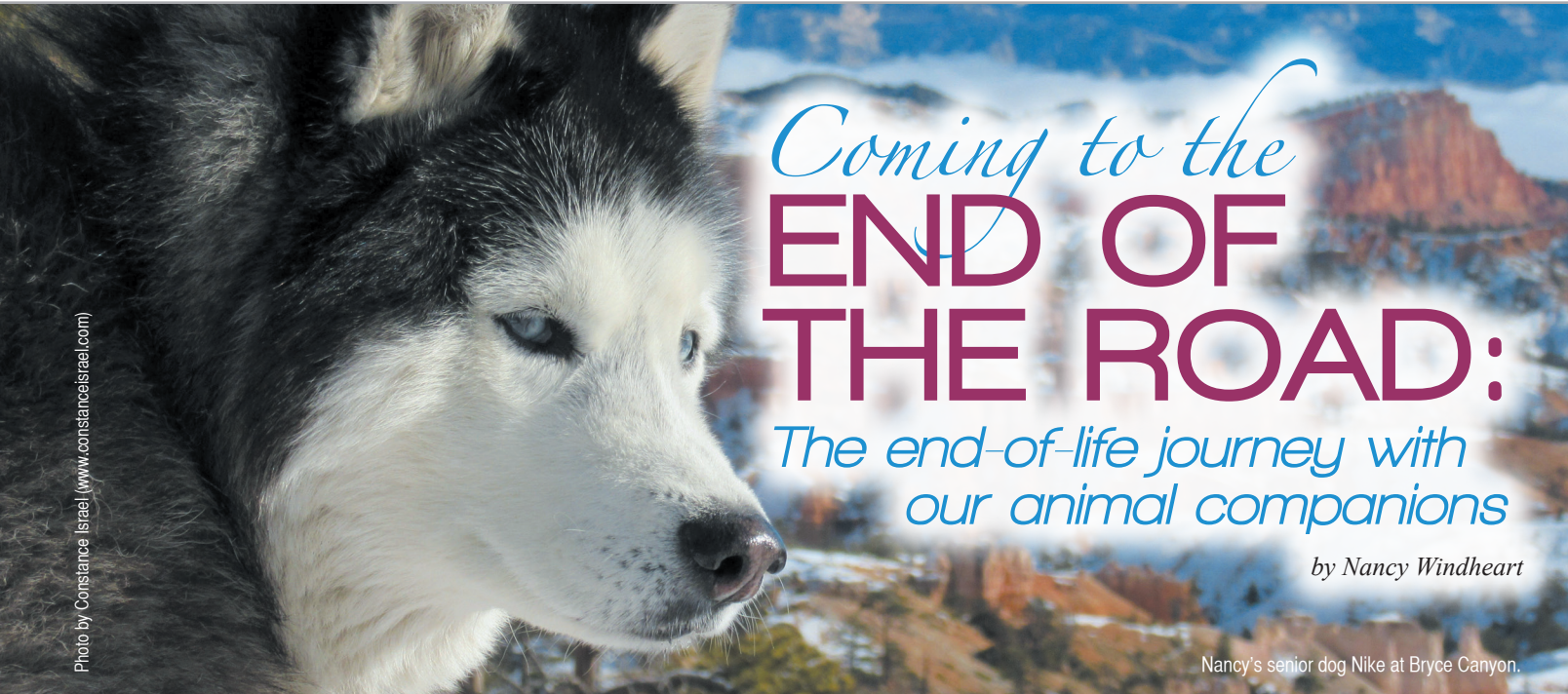


**KEEP IT
SIMPLE...**

WITH NATURALLY
SOURCED SUPPLEMENTS!

The Horse World's
Final frontier

Thoughts from Chris Lombard



Coming to the
END OF THE ROAD:
The end-of-life journey with our animal companions

by Nancy Windheart

Nancy's senior dog Nike at Bryce Canyon.

Photo by Constance Israel (www.constanceisrael.com)

Lossing a beloved animal friend to death, whether sudden or expected, is one of the most difficult experiences that we face. And yet, in the middle of the grief, pain, and sorrow of letting go, there are transcendent, powerful gifts that animals share with their people. It's an honor and a privilege to be a facilitator of end-of-life conversations between animals and their families... it's some of the hardest and holiest work that I do as an animal communicator and animal Reiki practitioner.

Here are a couple of the most important things I've learned from the animals about end-of-life, death, and the afterlife:

1 The form changes, but the relationship remains.
 Love is the greatest power in the universe... and it is the living, breathing core of a relationship that does not change.

Many animals have a deep awareness that they are not their bodies... that their bodies are a container for their spirits, which are much larger and greater than their current physical form.

I hear this message over and over again from the animals, in different ways...both before and after death. One horse said it this way:

"My body is my suit...the container that my spirit has used for a time. It's coming to the end of its usefulness, and it's time for me to leave it and find another expression for my essence. When I leave, I'll simply lay it down, with gratitude."

And he did.

Each animal is an individual with its own journey of experience and growth on the other side, which may or may not always involve its people.

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However, animals will often stay in touch with their human companions in various ways.

One cat I worked with recently who has been in the spirit world for several months delights in sending her people messages in the physical world... moving a bottle cap (one of her favorite toys) from one place to another in a room where there is no wind or fan... flickering the lights... showing shadows in the shape of her former body around the house.

Animals will sometimes leave scents, create shapes in the clouds as a message to their people, or bring messages that their person will recognize, such as messages on signs or license plates. I worked with a Pomeranian named Bear who loved to put things that were related to both bears and Pomeranians in his person's path when she was missing him deeply. They showed up in unexpected and often humorous ways and brought her great delight and comfort.

Although being aware of our animals' continuing connection to us even after death does not eradicate the grief of missing their physical presence in our lives, it can help us with feelings of despair of losing our animal



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Niki, Lisa and Kenny's Siamese, enjoying her final days, sitting by the fire with Keiko.



Spirit and Kenny right before her passing.



Levi cradling Spirit's body, saying "good-bye".

friend completely. Without a spiritual perspective, death feels like a hopeless ending. With awareness that the physical body does not encompass the fullness of any being, whether human or animal, we can move through our natural, healthy grief process with the awareness that our animal friend is in another form and our relationship with them can continue.

2 Animals can participate in decisions about their care and communicate about their wishes, feelings, and experiences of their bodies and spirits after death.

Many people are able to have these conversations with animals on their own, whether or not they realize that they are communicating telepathically. ("I just knew it was time to let him go" is one example of this kind of communication and knowing.)

Sometimes, it can be helpful to have a skilled professional animal communicator to translate for an animal and facilitate a two-way conversation between an animal and its human companions. In times of great emotion, having a compassionate intermediary to assist with these conversations can bring resolution and comfort to both the animal and the human.

A few years ago, I worked with a wonderful dog I'll call Roscoe who was diagnosed with an inoperable tumor on his liver at the age of 13. The veterinarian recommended "sooner rather than later" euthanasia, as there was no viable treatment, and the risk of the tumor causing a difficult and painful death was high. My client made the appointment and called me to have a last, end-of-life conversation with her beloved dog.

I was stunned by the vehemence of his communication... if there is such a thing as telepathic yelling, this was it: "Don't do it! Don't take me to the vet! I'm not ready to go yet! It's not my time!"

He was clear. We repeated the risks to him, made sure he understood his situation, and his response was the same. "It's not my time! I'm not ready to go!"

I'm careful to maintain my ethical boundaries and not give advice or recommendations on these kinds of decisions, but simply to offer the animal's viewpoint and communication. In this case, my client decided to cancel the euthanasia appointment and began to work with a holistic veterinarian, acupuncturist, and other healing professionals, along with conventional veterinary care. We stayed in touch with Roscoe through regular communication consultations, and I offered distant Reiki to support both him and his person during this time.

Roscoe and his person enjoyed over 18 months together after his initial diagnosis. Their relationship deepened and strengthened. His quality of life was good...including going to work with his person, taking daily walks at the park, and eating delicious homemade food that his family cooked for him.

When the day came that Roscoe left his body, it wasn't a painful, traumatic death. He and his beloved person went out for their daily walk in their favorite park, and he suddenly stopped, lay down on the ground, and died. There was no struggle, no pain...he simply left. He left his body as he'd lived...full out, strong, and doing what he loved most.

Each animal has an individual and unique awareness and experience of the death process. Some wish to "do it on their own." Some are very grateful for the help of humane euthanasia to end their physical suffering. Some choose to be alone when they pass; some want to be with their humans. Some don't know or don't care about these issues and simply trust their people to make the best decisions for them.

Sometimes animals leave suddenly, without the chance to have these preparatory kinds of conversations. When that happens, there is often a

traumatic shock for the person that can be addressed by conversations with the animal in the spirit world.

Animals in spirit will often have a “big picture” perspective of their lives and deaths. They can see the spiritual lessons, sometimes show what happened to their bodies in a kind of “x-ray” vision, and talk about their experiences as they left their bodies.

More than anything, what I’ve learned is that there are no right or wrong choices...each animal, each person, each relationship, each death, is unique. Talking with your animals at various stages along their journey toward death can deepen your relationship and help you to feel clarity about the decisions that you make together.

Recognizing the everlasting nature of love and partnering with our animals in their end-of-life process and beyond can create deep transformation in our lives and relationships with our beloved animal friends. ☺☺



About the author:

Nancy Windheart is an internationally respected animal communicator, animal communication teacher, and Reiki Master-Teacher. She teaches animal communication and Reiki classes and provides animal communication consultations for clients worldwide. Nancy’s work has been featured in television, radio, magazine, and online media, and she has written for many digital and print publications. She lives in the rural high desert near Sedona, Arizona with her partner and their animal family of dogs, cats, and chickens. www.nancywindheart.com

EDITOR’S NOTE:

When I approached Nancy about writing an article for the Silently Speaking section and we decided on the topic of animals passing over, all of our (Kenny and mine) animals were in great health. Little did I know that we would be going through a passing while getting this article ready for layout. In fact, Nancy’s valuable insight reaffirmed our decision to help our 15-year-old dog, Spirit, cross the Rainbow Bridge.

Being a very sensitive dog, we were concerned that Spirit would be terribly upset even having the vet touch her. But she did know it was her time and that she needed help; she passed very peacefully with Kenny and I holding her.

After her passing, we allowed the other three dogs to say “good-bye.” Levi, her best friend, cradled her body as seen in the photo. Farewell, Dear Spirit!

— Lisa Ross-Williams

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