

Would You Clone Your Dog?

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WITH THE HELP OF MODERN SCIENCE, SOME PET OWNERS ARE BRINGING THEIR PETS BACK FROM THE DEAD. **BY KRISTIN LEWIS**

He had been part of your family for as long as you can remember. He understood you better than anyone else. He was your biggest fan. And now, sadly, your beloved dog Scruff has died.

Your mom has offered to buy you a new dog—a dog just like Scruff. But you don't want a new dog. And you certainly don't want a dog *like* Scruff. You want Scruff.

Thanks to a scientific process called cloning, you can have him.

Sort of.

Science Fiction?

This is how cloning works: A scientist would use Scruff's genetic material to make a cluster of cells called an embryo. That embryo would be implanted in the womb of a doggy mom, where it would hopefully grow just as it would in a normal pregnancy. The mother would give birth to a Scruff clone.

This might sound like science fiction, but scientists have been cloning all kinds of animals for years. Researchers use clones of mice and pigs to study human



diseases and search for cures. A lab in Korea supplies police with cloned service dogs that sniff out bombs and drugs. The same lab is also cloning endangered species, including dog breeds like the Tibetan mastiff.

Is it surprising that people now want to use this science to clone their deceased pets?

Companies that offer pet-cloning services say cloning is a

way to honor a beloved animal and to calm the grief of losing a pet. But cloning has a dark side. For every successful clone, there are dozens of failures. Cloned animals tend to have serious health problems, shorter life spans, and birth defects. In one case, a lamb was born with abnormally thick muscles around its lungs—so thick it couldn't breathe. Most of these animals have to be put down.

ROBERT MATSON
ISTOCKPHOTO.COM (PENCIL)

Then there is the fact that a clone may not be anything like the original. That's because an animal's temperament is determined not only by its genes, but also by its life experiences. "Each cloned animal has its own unique personality," says Robert Lanza, a scientist at Advanced Cell Technology.

Just ask Sandra and Ralph Fisher. They owned a bull named Chance, an unusually gentle animal who posed for photos with kids. When Chance died, the Fishers were devastated. So they had him cloned, and Second Chance was born. Second Chance did not have the same mild disposition. In fact, he had a vicious streak. Second Chance attacked Ralph twice—almost killing him.

Stuffed Scruff?

Even though dozens of pet owners have ordered clones, polls show that most Americans think pet cloning is wrong. Animal-rights groups agree. They point to the thousands of shelters overflowing with dogs and cats in need of homes. Why not adopt one of these pets—instead of forking over the staggering \$155,000 it can cost to clone an animal?

There's always a third option for those who can't bear to part with their deceased pets: Have them stuffed. Pet taxidermy is surprisingly popular. It's far cheaper and less controversial than cloning. And you'll save a fortune on dog food. ●

What Do You Think?

Is pet cloning OK? Go back to the article to find arguments that support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.



YES

WHERE DO I SIGN UP?

1 It's a way to
Keep my pet's
legacy alive.

2 _____

3 _____

NO

IT'S TOTALLY TWISTED.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS—and decide what you think about this issue. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become a thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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