



THE HARDEST DAY

A Documentary by Ross Taylor and Luke Rafferty

LOGLINE

The Hardest Day is a film that explores the intimacy of the human-animal bond, and the last moments between. A meditation on love, loss and the intersection between, the film also sheds new light on the veterinarians and support staff who help along the way.



SYNOPSIS (short form)

The Hardest Day is a film that explores the intimacy of the human-animal bond, and the last moments between. A meditation on love, loss, and the intersection between, the film also explores the relationships of those who help along the way.

The film is an unprecedented look into the lives of pet owners and their pets, as well as the care givers in the at-home pet euthanasia community. It lends insight into the remarkable love that wraps around the community, while wrestling with the universal notion of loss.

The acts of kindness from the vets and support staff from an at-home euthanasia service called Lap of Love are also documented in ways unseen before. The result is a beautiful, yet somber, look at this community of pets owners, the end-of-life veterinary community, and the animals in which they love.

SYNOPSIS (long form)

The Hardest Day is a film that explores the intimacy of the human-animal bond - specifically, the last moments before, and after, the passing of a pet at home with their owner. Friends in social media feeds post memorials of their beloved pets almost weekly, often in the most heart-wrenching of tributes. It is a somber, and intense, testimony to the bond and the pain that comes when it is broken. And yet, it's a moment that is rarely documented.

This film examines the intense last moments shared between people and their pets. The decision to have at-home pet euthanasia is part of an emerging trend (to have end of life care in the home, instead of in a clinic). Nationally, tens of thousands of pet owners go through this painful experience each year. This project lends insight into this intense bond between humans and their beloved pets. It also examines the remarkable love that wraps around the community, while wrestling with the universal notion of loss. The acts of kindness from the vets and support staff are also documented in ways unseen before.

A cornerstone idea of the film is this - we want people going through the unseen traumatic experiences of loss with their pets to know they're not alone. All too often, people are dismissive of the pain that accompanies this loss. This project lends insight into this intense bond, and why we feel as connected.

DIRECTOR BIOS



ROSS TAYLOR is an assistant professor at the University of Colorado Boulder. While at CU Boulder he has been one of two faculty fellows in the Center for Western Civilization, Thought and Policy. Previously, he was a visiting professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the inaugural fellow with the Multimedia Photography and Design Department at Syracuse University.

The photographic portion of the film project has been published worldwide, seen by millions of people. Publications include: The Washington Post, People Magazine, The Daily Mail, BuzzFeed and industry publications such as PetaPixel, FStoppers and Psychology Today. In the spring of 2019, Taylor spoke at TEDxCU about the project.

Taylor has won numerous national and international awards, including Photojournalist of the Year (Large Markets). He's also been named Northern Photographer of the Year, Virginia Photographer of the Year and North Carolina Photographer of the Year (twice). His work in a trauma hospital in Afghanistan was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

LUKE RAFFERTY is a freelance filmmaker in Philadelphia. He has a passion for visual storytelling, and has traveled to over 35 countries to tell stories and create visuals from around the world. His editorial work has been featured in The New York Times, Wall Street Journal and CNN, and has been recognized by the National Press Photographers Association and the Hearst Foundation.

Rafferty began his career as a staff photographer for a fire company at age 16, and learned the importance of thoughtful storytelling and the transformative power that comes from empathic images. He now works with organizations worldwide to promote social change through videos; including National Geographic Partners, The Biden for America Campaign, The JetBlue Foundation, and 21st Century Fox.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When someone's pet dies, many might think - it's just a dog. Or, it's just a cat. I can speak from experience that it's not. My interest in this began a couple of years ago. A friend of mine was agonizing over the death of her dog. She decided to have her pet euthanized at home. She didn't want the animal to be stressed by a visit to the clinic, and thought it would be easier on her dog. At the same time, friends in my social media feeds were posting memorials of their beloved pets almost weekly - in the most heart-wrenching of tributes. They were somber and beautiful testimonies to the bond, and the pain that comes when broken. Yet, it's rarely documented.

We wanted to make a film that explored the intensity of the last moments of the bond, and the veterinarians (and support staff) who assist families during this difficult time. It's here that I've witnessed the greatest empathy so far. It's also crystallized the notion that people, even in the most difficult of situations, want to share their story. At root, it's a universal notion that grief is assuaged by the notion that we're not alone in feeling it. The film is also a credit to those who veterinarians, and support staff, who help quietly on a daily basis to help mitigate this grief.

— Ross Taylor



Love, Michelle, Allan, and Fam
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Don't cry because it's over.
Smile because it happened.

Dear Dr. Loren,
Thank you for the
provided

FACT SHEET

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Duration	53 minutes
Release Year	2019
Genre	Documentary
Aspect Ratio	16:9
Format	ProRes
Location	Florida
Language	English

PROMOTIONAL

Screener Link	by request
Trailer Link	vimeo.com/354052707 password: LOVE
Still Images	by request and on website
Official Site	thehardestdayfilm.com





CONTACT

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When people lose their pets, it's like losing a part of themselves.