



TRANQUIL PASSING
IN HOME PET EUTHANASIA

Quality of Life:

Deciding on the right time to let a love one go can be one of the most difficult decisions we have to make. Our pets are part of our family, for many of us they are our children. Euthanasia can be a kind choice for many pets. Needless suffering that can be gracefully prevented or ended can be a gift to our beloved companions. For pets that are critically or terminally ill, in hospice care, or have conditions that are beyond our emotional or financial ability to appropriately treat, euthanasia is a valid option. Euthanasia is a very personal decision. A consultation with your veterinarian to discuss your pet's condition can be very helpful and meaningful. While there are many things that contribute to a pet's quality of life we look at three main areas.

1. Is your pet eating?
2. Is your pet able to get up and go to the bathroom normally?
3. Does your pet still exhibit specific personality traits?

There are many other factors that can contribute. You may ask why perception of pain is not on the list. Certainly constant or persistent pain is a quality of life problem. The difficulty with pain assessment is that most animals do not show pain in the same way you or I would and it can often be difficult to assess whether or not your pet is in pain. In our experience pets that are in pain will show deficits in one or more of the above areas. When there are deficits in one or more of these areas we consider the pet to have a quality of life issue. If this issue cannot be resolved or aggressively addressed humane euthanasia should be considered as a valid and kind option.

1. Is your pet eating? Most people are very familiar with their individual pet's appetite. Some dogs (a Labrador for example) may be an excellent eater and may inhale anything and everything offered. Other dogs (a Chihuahua for instance) may be a finicky eater and it may not be unusual for them to skip meals periodically. Each pet should be evaluated by someone familiar with their normal appetite. If a Labrador with a normally voracious appetite stops eating, or suddenly becomes finicky, it is an indication that this animal is not feeling well and could be in pain. If a finicky Chihuahua hasn't eaten in several days and won't take their favourite treat, it can be an indication that they may be uncomfortable and in pain.

Appetite can be more difficult to assess in finicky eaters. Most people are familiar with how often their pet eats. They may say, "It is normal for Fluffy to skip breakfast but she hasn't eaten in 2 days and I'm worried." A persistent change in appetite that is abnormal for an individual pet could be a sign of pain, discomfort, or stress. If allowed to persist weight loss, weakness, and further deterioration will occur.

2. Is your pet able to get up and go to the bathroom normally? Most animals will not lay in their own feces or urine. When a pet gets too ill to be able to stand or walk, or if your pet is hiding and you find them laying in their own feces or urine, in most instances this indicates that they are too ill, weak, painful, or uncomfortable to void normally. Many older animals may have accidents as they get older or



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may begin going to the bathroom in inappropriate places. This can be normal and is not necessarily a quality of life issue. Concerns about quality of life occur not when inappropriate urination and defecation are occurring, but when pets are laying in their urine or feces. This can be a pretty strong indicator for discomfort, pain, weakness, or stress.

3. Does your pet exhibit specific personality traits? Every pet is an individual. All pets have specific traits, features or behaviours that make them unique. For example maybe your cat comes running every time they hear you open a can, or maybe they love to sit on your lap and purr while you are watching tv. Maybe your dog comes to greet you at the door when you get home or maybe he always barks or growls at the mailman when mail is delivered. Little behaviours and traits are what makes our pets unique and it is how they show their personality. When our pets start hiding, or seeking seclusion and they stop doing these behaviours that we are accustomed to, it is an indication of discomfort, pain, weakness or stress. Nobody knows these behaviours better than you do and no one is better able to assess your pet for these things than you.

In summary if a pet parent notices a deficit in any one of these areas further investigation is warranted to evaluate the pet for a quality of life issue. Some dogs for example may periodically exhibit deficits in one or more of these areas. For example some dogs around or on the 4th of July will exhibit deficits in many of these areas. Stress from fire-works or loud noises can precipitate changes in routine/behavior. These pets a week later once the fireworks have passed will often resume a normal schedule. Each pet needs to be evaluated on an individual basis. Deficits that are persistent and are not associated with a behavior or easily treatable condition are consistent with a quality of life issue. Any quality of life issues should be addressed with your veterinarian. If the quality of life issue is confirmed and resolution cannot be achieved, then euthanasia is a valid option.