

Quality of Life Scale

When evaluating the quality of life of your pet, there is no “one size fits all” solution. This document is meant as a starting point to provide some general guidelines and help you make an educated, informed, and supported choice that fits not only your pet’s medical condition, but also your wishes and expectations. In short, quality of life applies not only to the pet, it also applies to you!



Score each item below from 0-2:

0 = agree (true for my pet)

1 = some changes seen

2 = disagree (not true for my pet)



SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

- Desire to be with the family has not changed
- Interacts normally with family or other pets (i.e., no increased aggression or other changes)



HEALTH

- No changes in breathing or panting patterns
- No outward signs of pain (excessive panting, pacing, and whining are most commonly seen)
- No pacing around the house
- My pet’s overall condition has not changed recently



MENTAL HEALTH

- Enjoys normal play activities
- Still dislikes the same thing (i.e., still hates the mailman = 0, or doesn’t bark at the mailman anymore = 2)
- No outward signs of stress or anxiety
- Does not seem confused or apathetic
- Nighttime activity is normal, no changes seen



NATURAL FUNCTIONS

- Appetite has stayed the same
- Drinking has stayed the same
- Normal urination habits
- Normal bowel movement habits
- Ability to ambulate (walk around) has stayed the same

RESULTS

0-8: Quality of life is most likely adequate. No medical intervention required yet, but guidance from your veterinarian may help you identify signs to look for in the future.

9-16: Quality of life is questionable and medical intervention is suggested. Your pet would certainly benefit from veterinary oversight and guidance to evaluate the disease process he/she is experiencing.

17-36: Quality of life is a definite concern. Changes will likely become more progressive and more severe in the near future. Veterinary guidance will help you better understand the end stages of your pet’s disease process in order to make a more informed decision of whether to continue hospice care or elect peaceful euthanasia

Family Concerns



Score each item below from 0-2:

0 = I am not concerned at this time

1 = There is some concern

2 = I am concerned about this

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE FOLLOWING THINGS:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet suffering | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire to perform nursing care for your pet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet dying alone | <input type="checkbox"/> Concern for other household animal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not knowing the right time to euthanize | <input type="checkbox"/> Coping with loss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to perform nursing care for your pet | <input type="checkbox"/> Other members of the family (i.e. children) |

RESULTS

0-4: Your concerns are minimal at this time. You have either accepted the inevitable loss of your pet and understand what lies ahead, or have not yet given it much thought. If you have not considered these things, now is the time to begin evaluating your own concerns and limitations.

5-9: Your concerns are mounting. Begin your search for information by educating yourself on your pet's condition; it's the best way to ensure you are prepared for the emotional changes ahead.

10-16: Your concerns about the changes in your pet are valid. Now is the time to prepare yourself and to build a support system around you. Veterinary guidance will help you prepare for the medical changes in your pet while counselors and other health professionals can begin helping you with anticipatory grief.



Topics to address with your veterinarian:

The topics below, along with the information from the Quality of Life scales above, are a good start for productive discussion with your veterinarian.

These are some open-ended questions that assist in evaluating your family's time, emotional, and (when appropriate, financial) budgets:

1. Have you ever been through the loss of a pet before? If so, what was your experience (good or bad, and why)?
2. What do you hope the life expectancy of your pet will be? What do you think it will be?
3. What is the ideal situation you wish for your pet's end of life experience? (at home, pass away in her sleep, etc.)



Suggestions on using this quality-of-life scale:

1. Complete the scale at different times of the day, note circadian fluctuations in well-being. (We find most pets tend to do worse at night and better during the day.)
2. Request multiple members of the family complete the scale; compare observations.
3. Take periodic photos of your pet to help you remember their physical appearance. It can also be helpful, in making an objective evaluation of your pet's quality of life, to look at photos from throughout the pet's life. Often, when we are with them every day, it is difficult to truly see the slow changes that have occurred.