

Quality of Life Scale

Pet caregivers can use this Quality of Life Scale to determine the success of care. Score patients using a scale of: 0 to 10 (10 being ideal).

Score Criterion:

0-10 HURT - Adequate pain control and the ability to breathe comfortably are the most important considerations. Ongoing or uncontrolled pain significantly affects quality of life. Difficulty breathing outweighs all other concerns and requires immediate attention. Ask yourself whether your pet's pain is well managed and whether they can breathe easily at rest. If oxygen support is needed to keep your pet comfortable, or if breathing remains labored or distressing despite treatment, it may be a sign that quality of life is no longer acceptable.

0-10 HUNGER - Is the pet eating enough to maintain strength and comfort? Sometimes hand feeding, warming food, or offering favorite foods can help stimulate appetite. In some cases, a feeding tube may be needed to provide adequate nutrition. If the pet consistently refuses food, struggles to eat, or if feeding becomes stressful or no longer improves comfort, this may be an important sign that quality of life is declining.

0-10 HYDRATION - Is the pet staying well hydrated? Signs of dehydration may include dry gums, lethargy, or reduced skin elasticity. Some pets no longer drink enough water on their own and may need daily or twice daily subcutaneous fluids to stay comfortable. If maintaining hydration becomes difficult despite these efforts, or if fluid support causes stress or discomfort for the pet or caregiver, it may be a sign that quality of life is declining.

0-10 HYGIENE - The pet should still be able to be brushed and kept clean without causing distress, especially after eliminations. Soft, supportive bedding should prevent pressure sores and allow the pet to rest comfortably. Wounds or irritated areas should remain manageable and heal with routine care. If keeping the pet clean and comfortable becomes increasingly difficult or causes pain or stress, it may be a sign that quality of life is declining..

0-10 HAPPINESS - Does the pet still show joy and interest in everyday life? Is the pet responsive to family members, toys, or favorite activities? Does the pet seem depressed, anxious, bored, fearful, or withdrawn? Can the pet's resting area be moved closer to family activities so they can feel comforted, connected, and included? If joy, engagement, or responsiveness continue to fade despite these efforts, it may be a sign that quality of life is declining.

0-10 MOBILITY & FUNCTION - Can the pet get up and move around without assistance? Does the pet need help from a person or mobility aids, such as a cart? Does the pet still show interest in walks or normal movement? Is the pet experiencing seizures, weakness, or frequent stumbling? While some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, many pets with limited mobility can still have a good quality of life if they remain alert, comfortable, and engaged, and if caregivers are willing and able to provide the support they need. If mobility continues to decline despite assistance, or if movement becomes consistently painful, distressing, or unsafe, this may be a sign that quality of life is worsening.

0-10 MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD - When good days still outnumber the bad, quality of life is often acceptable. When the difficult days begin to outweigh the good ones, it is a clear sign that quality of life is declining. At that point, caregivers should be gently supported in understanding that time may be limited. When suffering can no longer be relieved, choosing euthanasia may be the most compassionate and loving decision. If death occurs peacefully and without pain at home, that can also be a gentle and acceptable outcome.

***A total over 35 points represents acceptable life quality to continue with pet hospice**