

How Do I Know When it's Time?

Assessing Quality of Life for Your Companion Animal and End-of-Life Decisions

Deciding to euthanize your companion animal may be one of the most difficult decisions you ever make. Often, well-loved pets are euthanized to minimize unnecessary suffering. The quality of animals' lives is defined by their overall physical and mental well-being, not just one aspect of their lives.

Questions to ask yourself:

What is the most important thing when considering my pet's end-of-life treatment? What are my thoughts about euthanasia?

Would I consider euthanasia if the following were true about my pet:

- Feeling pain?
- Can no longer urinate and/or defecate?
- Starts to experience seizures?
- Has become uncontrollably violent or is unsafe to others?
- Has stopped eating
- Is no longer acting normally?
- Has a condition that will only worsen with time
- Financial situation prohibits treatment
- Palliative (hospice) care has been exhausted or is not an option?
- The Veterinary team recommends euthanasia-
- The veterinary team recommends euthanasia, but the symptoms or situations that I listed above are not present?

How do I know when it's time?

The following tools may aid you in making the decision to euthanize.

- Enlist the help of your veterinarian. While your veterinarian cannot make the decision for you, it is helpful for him/her to know that you are considering euthanasia.
- Remember how your pet looked and behaved prior to the illness. Sometimes changes are gradual and therefore hard to recognize. Look at photos or videos of your pet from before the illness.
- Mark good and bad days on a calendar. This could be as simple as a happy or sad face for good or bad. When bad days start to outweigh the good, it may be time to discuss euthanasia.
- Write a concrete list of three to five things your pet likes to do. When your pet is no longer able to enjoy these things, it may be time to discuss euthanasia