

# HOW DO I KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME?

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



We understand that your pet is an important member of your family and depending on their quality of life, difficult decisions all too often have to be made regarding their care. If your pet is ill, has received results of a terminal disease, or has been in an accident, the painful decision to euthanize is overwhelming. This is the time to consult with your veterinarian for treatment advice, likely outcomes, and types of financial investment involved, all while considering your pet's quality of life.

End of life care and euthanasia are the hardest decisions pet parents have to make. We find it most helpful for clients to see changes in their pet's health written on paper (in black-and-white) with our "Quality of Life Scale". This questionnaire (found on the back of this page) evaluates a pet's current condition and allows families to make educated decisions regarding their pet's final days.

Always remember, that the disease, illness or accident is what is taking your pet's life away. If you do choose to move forward with this painful decision, know that it is purely from selfless, unconditional love. You are returning that same love your beloved animal companion gave to you and your family.

## VARIABLES TO CONSIDER

- *Is my pet able to do the things that make them happy? Are they in pain or discomfort? Are they having more bad days than good?*
- *Study photos of your pet in healthier times, and take new snapshots every few days to compare pics. We don't always notice subtle changes because we see our pets every day—pictures (and/or quick videos) will help.*
- *Keep a journal of how your pet is doing, and use your notes to answer our "Quality of Life Scale" questionnaire on the next page.*
- *Look over your veterinarian consult sheets and notes from your exam visits to see your pet's medical history.*
- *If you are having doubts about your pet's wellness, seek the guidance of your family veterinarian, or contact NorthStar VETS® to evaluate your pet through our Emergency Service.*

# YOUR PET'S QUALITY OF LIFE ASSESSMENT

The quality of an animal's life is defined by their overall physical and mental well-being, not just one particular ailment. We understand the difficult choice of euthanasia, and want Pet Parents to feel comfortable and confident during their decision making process. The chart below is a helpful tool to better visualize your pet's declining health. We encourage you to thoughtfully calculate this questionnaire and ask other family members to also complete the scale so that you may compare all observations.

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet's Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Poor Quality of Life

Good Quality of Life

Please Circle Your Answers My Pet . . .	Strongly Agree (All the Time) -SEVERE-	Agree (Most of the Time) -SIGNIFICANT-	Neutral (Sometimes) -MILD-	Disagree (Occasionally) -SLIGHT-	Strongly Disagree (Never) -NONE-
Does not want to play or enjoy activities as before	1	2	3	4	5
Panting, trembling, shaking (even while resting)	1	2	3	4	5
Vomiting, nauseous, having diarrhea, not urinating	1	2	3	4	5
Not eating, (only hand-feeding or treats), drinking, weight loss	1	2	3	4	5
Not moving normally	1	2	3	4	5
Seems to be experiencing pain	1	2	3	4	5
Demeanor/behavior not the same as before diagnosed, or becoming ill	1	2	3	4	5
Hiding, does not seem to enjoy life	1	2	3	4	5
Depressed, sleeping more than usual	1	2	3	4	5
Does not move around as needed, requiring help to move around normally	1	2	3	4	5
Unable to groom after soiling on self, or not realizing urinating/defecating during sleep	1	2	3	4	5
Lifting my pet, carrying them outside to urinate and defecate has become more difficult	1	2	3	4	5
Trying to feed, clean, give medications has become more difficult	1	2	3	4	5
I am frequently becoming frustrated with my pet	1	2	3	4	5
Financially, it is becoming difficult to care for my pet	1	2	3	4	5
My pet's overall health has decline compared to the onset of illness/accident	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, our family's quality of life has changed	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Column Totals:</b>					

Should you have additional questions, or decide that the time has come to euthanize your pet, please know that NorthStar VETS is here for you 24/7 and 365 days a year.

Grand Total: \_\_\_\_\_

## 17-34:

Significant to Severe Decrease In Quality of Life . . .

Have your pet examined by your family veterinarian as soon as possible to discuss your pet's quality of life.

## 35-51:

Mild to Significant Decrease In Quality of Life . . .

Continue to monitor your pet using a journal and retake this survey again in a few weeks. Consider seeing your family veterinarian to discuss options to improve your pet's quality of life.

## 52-85:

Slight to No Decrease In Quality of Life . . .

Things are still looking pretty good! Enjoy your time with your pet and visit your family veterinarian yearly to maintain good quality of life.

  
NORTHSTAR VETS<sup>®</sup>  
Veterinary Emergency Trauma & Specialty Center  
Leading the Way

**(609) 259-8300**