



Quality of Life Scale

Pet's Name: _____

Date: _____

The categories provided in this HHHHHMM quality of life scale are a good starting point for thought, discussion and decision making. Understand that the total calculated at the end is a snapshot in time of how your pet is doing and will vary depending if your pet is having a good day/moment or a bad one. It can be retaken as many times as you would like.

For each category, score your pet using a scale of 0 to 10 (0= Unacceptable, and 10 = being ideal) to evaluate their quality of life.

- 10 **Hurt (in pain/distress)**—Is your pet in pain, including distress from difficulty with breathing? Can your pet's pain be successfully managed? Is oxygen necessary? Adequate pain control, including the ability to breathe, is the most important aspect of quality of life and it is first and foremost on the scale. Many pet owners may not realize that not being able to breathe easily can be one of the most painful experiences for an animal.
- 10 **Hunger (appetite)** – Is your pet eating enough? Has your pet lost interest in food? If your pet is not receiving adequate nutrition by hand feeding or other means of coaxing, then a feeding tube should be considered, especially for cats. Malnutrition develops quickly in sick animals if the care giver is not knowledgeable about pet nutrition.
- 10 **Hydration**—Is your pet dehydrated? Are subcutaneous fluids once or twice daily enough to resolve the problem? Are they well tolerated?
- 10 **Hygiene**—Is your pet able to urinate/defecate normally and in the proper location? Is your pet kept brushed and clean, particularly after elimination? Does your pet have pressure sores?
- 10 **Happiness**—Does your pet express joy and interest? Is he/she responsive and showing interest in things around him (family, toys, etc)? Is your pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored, or afraid? Can your pet's bed be near the kitchen and moved near family activities to minimize isolation?
- 10 **Mobility**—Can your pet get up without assistance or with assistance (human or mechanical help eg, a cart, Help 'Em Up harness) in order to satisfy their needs? Does he/she feel like going for a walk? Is he/she having seizures or stumbling? Is medication helping? Note: Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, yet an animal with limited mobility may still be alert and responsive, and can have a good quality of life as long as the family is committed and able to help their pet. Some cats and small lap dogs can and do seem to enjoy life with much less mobility than large and giant-breed dogs.
- 10 **More Good Days than Bad**—When bad days outnumber good days, the pet's suffering is appreciable and quality of life might be too compromised. When a healthy human-animal bond is no longer possible, the caregiver must be made aware that the end is near. The decision for euthanasia should be made sooner rather than later to prevent further suffering, or to end suffering. Making the decision for euthanasia is a kindness to pets that are suffering.

70 **A total >35 points is acceptable quality of life for pets and if applicable, hospice care can be continued.**

Original concept, Oncology Outlook, by Dr. Alice Villalobos, Quality of Life Scale Helps Make Final Call, VPN, 09/2004;
Adapted from: Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond, Blackwell Publishing, 2007.