



# WHEN IS IT TIME?



A Gentle Goodbye  
— VETERINARY HOSPICE —

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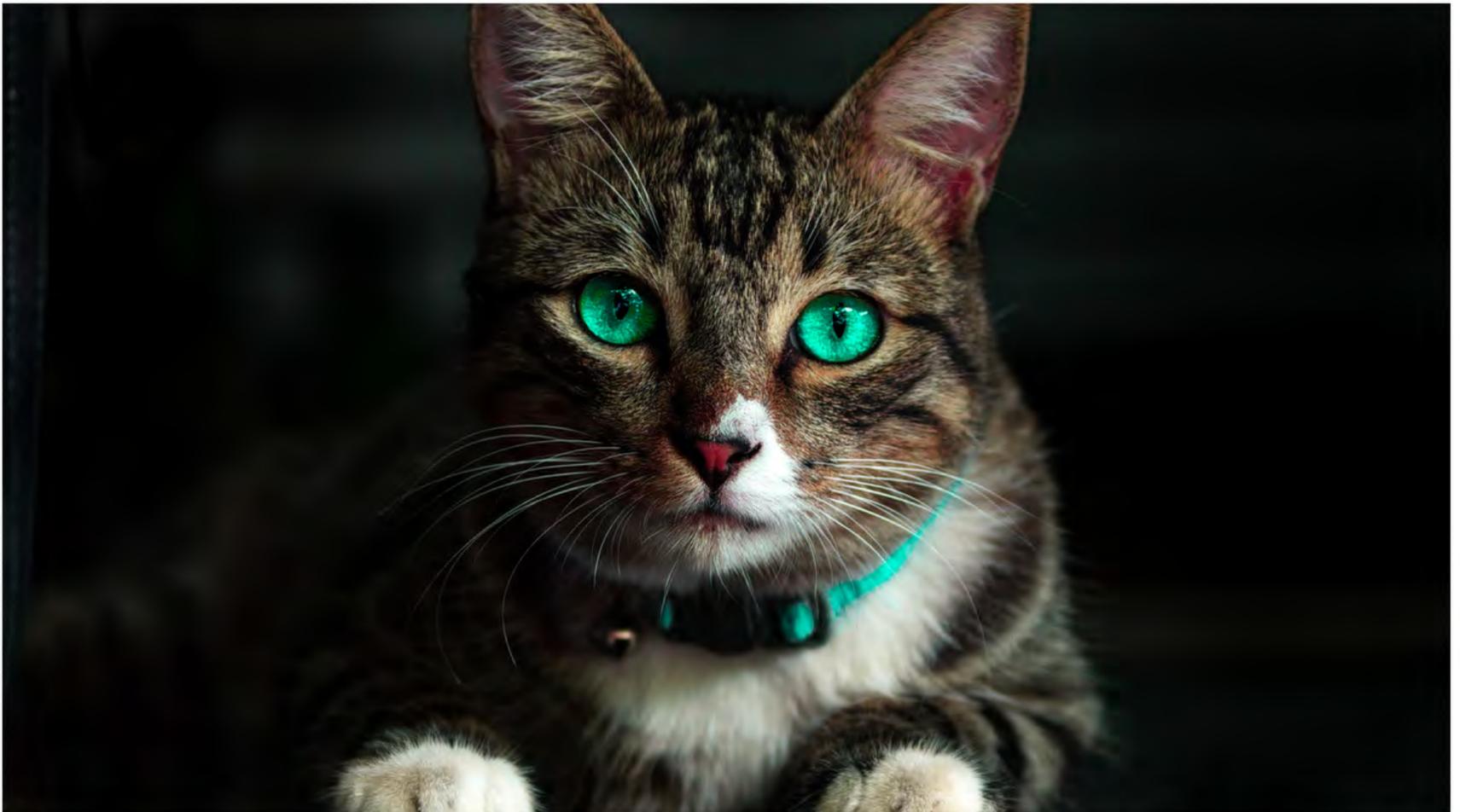
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*How to think about*

# QUALITY OF LIFE



One of the most difficult questions I am asked as a hospice veterinarian is whether someone's pet is happy, whether he or she has a "good quality of life." It is such a difficult question because there are so many shades of grey to happiness, just as in humans. There are many aspects to be examined, and some are more important than others. Some families will say something such as "he is still eating so well, so I know he is doing fine" which is true in some cases, but not in others.

As an example, I have many dogs as patients who will continue to eat as their health declines, even when they are gravely ill. If your dog is someone who normally eats no matter what is happening around him, I would not suggest placing a lot of importance on monitoring his appetite as an indicator of quality of life. However, if you have a dog whose decreased appetite is the first sign that something is wrong, this can be a helpful tool in assessing where his quality is. Cats tend to be more finicky in general, and their appetite does tend to decline during periods of declining health. However, this is something that varies greatly between individuals.

It can be helpful to fill out a "quality of life" scale, and even more helpful to have multiple friends of your pet do so. There are many of these available online, and there are links listed later. Sometimes it can be tremendously helpful to have a trusted friend or coworker fill this out because they see your dog or cat less often than you do, and can have a different perspective. There is a reason there are so many quality of life scales available, and not just one that is the Gold Standard.

The bottom line is that it is not an easy decision to come to, and even when you feel like it is the right time to put your beloved pet to sleep, it is still difficult not to have misgivings about it. If in doubt, it can be helpful to contact your veterinarian for an examination and frank discussion about your pet's quality of life, and expected path going forward. Your veterinarian may be able to give you another perspective, based on similar cases he or she has seen in the past, and can help you decide what is really in your beloved pet's best interest.

Think about what makes your dog or cat happy, and if he is continuing to do those things

**There are many Quality of Life Assessment tools available online, to help you decide how your treasured pet is really doing. Your veterinarian may be able to provide guidance as well.**

# QOL Scale

## From The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center

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

Poor Quality of Life

Good Quality of Life



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	1	2	3	4	5
does not respond to my presence or does not interact with me in the same way as before	1	2	3	4	5
does not enjoy the same activities as before	1	2	3	4	5
is hiding	1	2	3	4	5
demeanor/behavior is not the same as it was prior to diagnosis/illness	1	2	3	4	5
does not seem to enjoy life	1	2	3	4	5
has more bad days than good days	1	2	3	4	5
is sleeping more than usual	1	2	3	4	5
seems dull and depressed	1	2	3	4	5
seems to be or is experiencing pain	1	2	3	4	5
is panting (even while resting)	1	2	3	4	5
is trembling or shaking	1	2	3	4	5
is vomiting and/or seems nauseous	1	2	3	4	5
is not eating well - (may only be eating treats or only if fed by hand)	1	2	3	4	5
is not drinking well	1	2	3	4	5
is losing weight	1	2	3	4	5
is having diarrhea often	1	2	3	4	5
is not urinating well	1	2	3	4	5
is not moving normally	1	2	3	4	5
is not as active as normal	1	2	3	4	5
does not move around as needed	1	2	3	4	5
needs my help to move around normally	1	2	3	4	5
is unable to keep self clean after soiling	1	2	3	4	5
has coat that is greasy, matted, or rough-looking	1	2	3	4	5
How is my pet's overall health compared to the initial diagnosis/illness?	1 Worse	2	3 Same	4	5 Better
Current Quality of Life (place "X" along the line that best fits your pet's quality of life)					

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[vet.osu.edu/HonoringTheBond](http://vet.osu.edu/HonoringTheBond)



*"The only way to get over a death is by seeing it as a life completed, instead of a life interrupted."*

*--Anonymous*

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*"Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened."*

*--Dr. Seuss*



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# What to Expect



## When the doctor arrives...

When the doctor arrives at your home, she will first give your pet a injection that is a combination of

- Strong pain control +
- Anti-anxiety medication +
- Sedation

This ensures he is feeling pain-free, worry-free, and starting to get sleepy. This usually takes about 10 minutes, depending a bit on his body.

## Once your pet is calm and pain-free...

Once he is calm and pain-free, the doctor gives the euthanasia solution. This is literally an overdose of an anesthetic agent, so it will cause him to continue to get comfy and sleepy until he goes under general anesthesia, then passes away essentially in his sleep.

# Aftercare

We want you to feel comfortable with your choice

What you would like to do for your pet's aftercare is an important and personal decision, so you should feel empowered to choose whatever is right for you. We can leave your pet with you, to arrange cremation yourself or home burial. Or our doctor will take him with her when she leaves.

## OPTIONS THROUGH US

### Communal Cremation

If we take your pet for communal cremation, he will be cremated with other pets, and the ashes will be scattered. You will not receive anything back, but he is treated so respectfully, just as you would want for him.

### Private Cremation

If you choose private cremation, your pet will be cremated by himself, with no other pets, so you can have his ashes returned to you, typically by picking up from the crematory, or hand-delivery by a courier service.



# Contact Us

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