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Dr. Alice Villalobos'

QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE*

Pet caregivers can use this Quality of Life Scale to determine the success of pet hospice care. This scale can also be used by pet owners to help provide some objective criteria for making difficult end-of-life decisions.

Using a scale of 1(poor) to 10 (best):

HURT

Adequate pain control, including breathing ability, is first and foremost on the scale. Is the pet's pain successfully managed? Is oxygen necessary?

HUNGER

Is the pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the patient require a feeding tube?

HYDRATION

Is the patient hydrated? For patients not drinking enough, use subcutaneous fluids once or twice daily to supplement fluid intake.

HYGIENE

The patient should be kept brushed and cleaned, particularly after elimination. Avoid pressure sores and keep all wounds clean.

HAPPINESS

Does the pet express joy and interest? Is he responsive to things around him (family, toys, etc.)? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored or afraid? Can the pet's bed be close to the family activities and not be isolated?

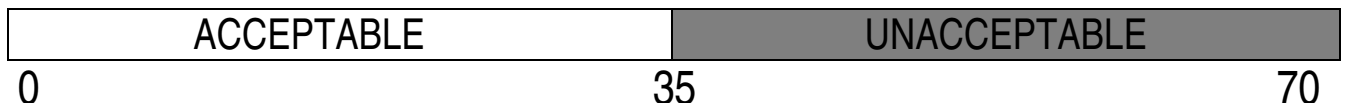
MOBILITY

Can the patient get up without assistance? Does the pet need human or mechanical help (e.g. a cart)? Does s/he feel like going for a walk? Is he having seizures or stumbling? (Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, but an animal that has limited mobility but is still alert and responsive can have a good quality of life as long as his caregivers are committed to helping him.)

MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD

When bad days outnumber good days, 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 needs to be made if the pet is suffering. If death comes peacefully and painlessly, that is OK.

TOTAL SCORE



* Adapted by Villalobos, A.E. Quality of Life Scale Helps Make Final Call, Veterinary Practice News, Sept. 2004; for Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology Honoring the Human-Animal Bond, by Blackwell Publishing, Table 10.1, released 2006.