

Eastgate Veterinary Centre

Quality of life tool

How do we know when a chronic long term condition significantly affects an animal's quality of life? The answers to the following questions form a quality of life score. This may help in making difficult decisions about when the time is right for an animal to be euthanased (put to sleep).

The HHHHMM scale (score 0-10 for each factor with 10 being best and 0 being worst)

Hurt	If breathing is laboured then score is 0 for this section. Is the condition painful? Is the pain control enough?	
Hunger	Is the animal eating enough? Does hand feeding or change of diet help?	
Hydration	Is the animal drinking enough? Is the animal dehydrated/urinating? Is there any way fluids can be supplemented?	
Hygiene	Is the animal clean? Are you able to groom and clean the animal? Can the animal get to the toilet? Are there any pressure sores/wounds?	
Happiness	Does the animal express joy and interest? Is the animal responsive to toys and people? Is the animal depressed lonely, bored, anxious or afraid? Can the pet's bed be moved so as not to be as isolated?	
Mobility	Can the animal get up without assistance? Does the animal need help rising or walking? How much? Does the animal want to go for a walk? Is the animal having seizures or stumbling? Animals with limited mobility may still be alert and bright and have a good quality of life but care givers have to be committed to quality care.	
More good days than bad	Are there more good days or bad days? When bad days outnumber good ones then quality of life may be compromised. Do you have a healthy bond with your animal?	
Total score		

When a healthy human-animal bond is no longer possible, there are more bad days than good or the animal is suffering then a decision to end this suffering may need to be made. If death comes peacefully and painlessly then this is OK.

A total score of >35 is an acceptable quality of life. If the score is lower than this and improvements cannot be made by changing nursing, management or medication then a decision to put the animal to sleep may need to be made.