

End of Life Considerations

As our pets age or develop serious disease, we become faced with the obligation to make the best, most compassionate decisions on their behalf. Please retain this information for your reference and call us as needed.

Quality of Life/When is it “time”?

Assessing quality of life factors can help you to decide when the most loving thing that you can do is help your beloved pet pass away peacefully. There are a few key indicators to consider:

1. Does your pet still engage in activities that s/he used to love?
2. Does your pet respond to affection in the usual way?
3. Does the pain or suffering outweigh the enjoyment in life?
4. Can we improve your pet’s condition or is it terminal?
5. Does your family agree on the answers to the above questions?

Quality of Life Scale	
Answer each question with a number 1-10, 10 being great/normal	
Score	Criterion
	Hurt: Is your pet’s pain successfully managed? Does your pet need oxygen therapy?
	Hunger: Is your pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help?
	Hydration: Is your pet dehydrated? Does your pet need subcutaneous fluid daily?
	Hygiene: Are you able to keep your pet clean and brushed?
	Happiness: Does your pet express joy or interest regarding family, toys, etc.? Is your pet depressed, anxious, bored, or afraid?
	Mobility: Can your pet get up without assistance? Does your pet want to do normal activity (go for a walk)? Is your pet having seizures or stumbling?
	More good days than bad: When bad days outnumber good days, quality of life might be compromised.
	Total: A total greater than 35 can represent an acceptable quality of life

Adaptation from Villalobos, A.E, *Quality of Life Scale Helps Make Final Call*

Counselling Resources

- Pet Loss Support Group Every Monday @ 7:00 p.m. @ AHS Golden Valley Conference Room D
- University of Minnesota Veterinary Social Services: 612-624-4747
- Pet Loss Support Hotlines: 800-565-1526, 888-332-7738, 877-394-2273
- Chat Groups on www.aplb.org

Websites

- www.petloss.com
- www.pet-loss.net

Books for Adults

- *Final Farewell: Preparing for and Mourning the Loss of Your Pet* By Marty Tousley and Katherine Heurman
- *Healing the Pain of Pet Loss: Letters in Memorium* edited by Kymberly Smith, The Charles Press.
- *Absent Friend: Coping with the Loss of a Treasured Friend* by Laura and Martyn Lee

Books for Children

- *For Every dog an Angel* by Christine Davis
- *For Every cat an Angel* by Christine Davis
- *I'll Always Love You* by Hans Wilhelm

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What is Euthanasia?

Euthanasia is the act of helping your pet pass away painlessly. This is achieved by a Veterinarian injecting an overdose of an anesthetic agent into your pet's vein. Your pet becomes unconscious and the heart stops. This procedure is very quick and the patient may pass away before all of the injection has been given.

We recommend placing a catheter in the vein before giving the injection so that the procedure may go more smoothly. We place a catheter at no extra cost and while it may take some additional time to perform the procedure, it allows us to administer the euthanasia solution without restraint or a needle poke in front of you. Some patients or guardians also feel more comfortable if the pet is first given a sedative injection.

Who should be present?

Not everyone is comfortable witnessing a beloved pet die. There is no shame in this. However, if you are comfortable staying with your pet, then we welcome you to do so.

It may be helpful to understand what death looks like before you decide what is best for you. In most cases of euthanasia, the pet quickly becomes limp and stops breathing. Animals do not close their eyes when they die. Rarely, there may be what appears to be a breath or some muscle twitches. These are purely reflexes and not a conscious activity of the pet. In some cases, pets that are very dehydrated and weak may have weak veins as well. In these cases, we may have to use more than one vein to administer the euthanasia solution or have more difficulty placing a catheter.

Care of Remains

Cremation is the most common way that we take care of the remains. We use a service called VHA, which has been performing cremation in the Twin Cities since 1984. If you plan to spread or bury your pet's ashes, you may choose an urn or a simple box for an additional fee. Ashes can take up 2 weeks to return to the clinic for pick-up.

Some people find mementos to be meaningful, such as a clipping of fur or a clay paw print (for a small fee). We can facilitate that for you after euthanasia. If you have a pet cemetery plot, then you are more than welcome to take your pet with you.

Same Day Cremation

- Pets Remembered (www.petsrememberedcremation.com)

Alternative ideas for remains

- Timberland Urns (www.timberlandurns.com)
- Cremation Jewelry

At Home Euthanasia Options

- MN Pets (www.mnpets.com)
- Dr. Jen Gale (www.jengaledvm.com)
- Lap of Love (www.lapoflove.com)

How will my appointment go?

Many clients prefer more privacy when coming in for this appointment. Please call us when you arrive at the Clinic and we can direct you to your room through the back door entrance. We will need the owner on the account to fill out some paperwork with your cremation choice. At this time, many clients choose to pay for the procedure so you can leave at any time afterwards. After your pet has its catheter placed, you will let us know when you are ready for the Veterinarian to come in and administer the euthanasia solution.

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Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns before your appointment.