

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 your pet's pain successfully managed? Is oxygen necessary?

### HUNGER

Is your pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does s/he require a feeding tube?

### HYDRATION

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

### HYGIENE

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

### HAPPINESS

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

### MOBILITY

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

### 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

A total score of greater than 35 (out of a possible 70) is generally representative of acceptable life quality. This scale was originally developed to help pet caregivers determine whether or not hospice care should be continued, so it assumes that the patient is already infirm and nearing the time to say goodbye. Talk with your veterinarian if you have questions or need help evaluating any of these criteria.