



MNpets

gentle euthanasia at home

Pain, Quality of Life – Part II

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“I don’t think my pet is in pain.”

We often hear pet owners grappling with the issue of pain for their pet. After completing your pet’s quality of life checklist (described in Quality of Life, Part I), you may have found that while you were making a list of all the things your pet could do in the prime of life another list began to form including things your pet never used to do or experience before. Sometimes the things on this second list are actually symptoms or behaviors related to a disease process or illness that your pet is experiencing. This is an important list to keep track of.

When evaluating pain and suffering, diminished quality of life could in itself be considered a form of suffering. Additionally, it is crucial to evaluate suffering in terms of physical pain and other symptoms. Animals instinctively want to hide illness and pain—in the wild they were vulnerable to predators if they showed weakness. There’s also evidence that pets don’t feel the same emotions about pain as we humans do and therefore may not make symptoms as apparent. Often we are the last to know that they have not been feeling well.

Here is a list of some of the obvious and less obvious signs that your pet is experiencing some pain:

- Limping
- Crying or whining
- Pawing, licking or scratching an area repeatedly
- Dilated pupils
- Loss of appetite, vomiting
- Loss of energy
- Reluctance to move
- Inability to sleep restfully
- Agitation
- Nipping, baring teeth, growling, hissing
- Hiding
- “Guarding” a painful area, hunched back
- Tail tucked or held low, little or no wagging
- Shaking/trembling
- Panting
- Reluctance to be picked up
- “Worried” facial expression
- Doesn’t respond when called

It is helpful to keep a journal which records the quality of life and/or pain your pet has experienced each day. It is also a good way to develop daily communication around your pet’s illness among family members, especially children. Even when your pet has a significant or terminal illness there is still health present in their bodies. Many pet owners find that their loved one has good days and bad—keeping a journal is a good tool to help you know when the good days become fewer or further between. http://www.lapoflove.com/Pet_Quality_of_Life_Scale.pdf is a daily diary page that we like.