

Knowing When

It's Time to Say Goodbye



Knowing When:

3 Helpful Things to Consider

- ① Is my pet feeling pain or discomfort?
- ② Has my pet's quality of life diminished significantly?
- ③ Am I able to meet my pet's needs?

How do you know when it's time?

This is a decision made with careful, thoughtful love. This resource is designed to help you understand when euthanasia may be the kindest option. After reviewing this handout as well as our quality-of-life scale, if the answer is still unclear, we suggest scheduling a quality-of-life assessment with us or your regular care provider. While you are the expert on your pet, it can be helpful to have an outside opinion, especially from a veterinary professional.

Pain or Discomfort

It can be difficult to know how your pet is feeling, and oftentimes, they don't want us to know if they're feeling poorly. Below are a few common signs of discomfort in pets:

- Hiding in odd places or avoiding social interactions
- Shaking, trembling, or panting
- Restlessness
- Vocalizing or becoming aggressive when touched
- Staying in one spot, avoiding movement

Quality of Life

Quality of life refers to your pet's general well-being. Recognizing a significantly diminished quality of life is sometimes an indication that it's time to consider euthanasia. Signs to watch for include:

- No longer engaging in regular activity (playing, going on walks, etc.)
- Bad days outnumber the good days
- Mental distress, anxiety, or confusion
- Change in appetite or thirst
- Unable to perform daily basic living needs

Meeting your Pet's Needs

Your own physical, financial, and emotional resources can impact your ability to care for a pet who is nearing the end of life. Sometimes your pet's needs exceed your personal resources. It's important to remember that this is a reflection of their increasing quality of life needs, and not any kind of failure on your part. Some common, but difficult, factors that may limit your ability to meet your pet's increasing needs:

- Your obligations at home or work
- The financial reality of long-term medical care
- Behavioral issues which compromise the well-being of others and the human-animal bond
- Limitations that make responding to an emergency situation difficult

Typically, there isn't one unmistakable sign to know when it's time to say goodbye. Rather than being a specific moment, we think of it as a window of time in which euthanasia is appropriate, and that window could be days, weeks, or even months long. Trust yourself that you are the one who can best determine the right time. No one knows your pet as well as you. It's normal to feel emotional and conflicted about your decision. It can be helpful to reach out for support from friends and family who can provide a patient, listening ear.



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