QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE

Pet caregivers can use this Quality of Life Scale to determine the success of pet hospice care. Using a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (best), patients can be scored.

HURT
Adequate pain control, including breathing ability, is the first and foremost on the scale. Is the pet's pain successfully managed? Is oxygen necessary?

HUNGER
Is the pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the patient require a feeding tube?

HYDRATION
Is the patient hydrated? For patients not drinking enough, use subcutaneous fluids once or twice daily to supplement fluid intake.

HYGIENE
The patient should be kept brushed and cleaned, particularly after elimination. Avoid pressure sores and keep all wounds clean.

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

MOBILITY
Can the patient get up without assistance? Does the pet need human or mechanical help (e.g. a cart)? Does he/she feel like going for a walk? Is he/she having seizures or stumbling? (Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, but an animal who has limited mobility but is still alert and responsive can have good quality of life as long as his/her caregivers are committed to helping him/her.)

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.