



**New Berlin Animal Hospital**  
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## **Quality of Life and Euthanasia**

As pet owners and caregivers, we may face the decision of ending a pet's suffering in a humane and painless way. It is very difficult for most people to make this choice and we have all had to struggle with how to make this decision. Quality of life issues are very real and can be used to assess a pet's status, whether it is to continue medical care or to perform euthanasia.

1. **Pain** - Is pain control necessary? Is it adequate for the pet's condition? Are there more good (pain-free or low pain days) than bad days? If pain can not be controlled, euthanasia may be necessary to end a pet's suffering.
2. **Hunger** - Maintaining adequate nutrition, especially in sick or painful animals is critical. When a pet stops eating, a decision needs to be made whether to force-feed or tube feed. If nutritional needs can not be met, this is a valid reason for euthanasia.
3. **Hydration** - At some point a pet may need supplemental fluids. Some owners are able to do this at home. Dehydration can be life threatening and will lead to organ failure. If home care is not an option, other plans should be made to prevent suffering.
4. **Hygiene** - Can the pet be kept brushed and cleaned or is he/she able to move enough so that it does not end up laying in its own waste? This can be particularly frustrating for animals, especially cats. Many animals lose interest in self-care when their quality of life is poor.
5. **Happiness** - Does the pet enjoy his/her life? Is there interaction with family members? Or is the joy of life gone? If depression has become an issue, some medications may help, but this is a critical point in an animal's life.
6. **Mobility** - If a problem with getting an animal outside to potty or even to the litter pan has become a daily issue, steps need to be taken for extra nursing care to prevent urine burns and skin infections. If this is not possible, euthanasia may be the only option.
7. **Quality of Life** - When there are too many bad days, the quality of life is compromised. This is the number one way to make the very difficult decision to euthanize a pet. We need to put our pet's feelings first even though we may miss them terribly.

A lot of times we may prefer a pet to pass on naturally at home, in their own bed or in our arms. This is ok **ONLY** if the pet is not suffering. Home euthanasia is an excellent alternative if the pet has become visibly uncomfortable or if the course of the disease is prolonged.

Please ask one of our veterinarians for advice if you do not feel comfortable making this decision. We are always available to help.