

Quality of Life and Determining When to Say Goodbye

Pet euthanasia may be one of the most difficult decisions a person will ever make for their pet. The factors around aging and death are beyond our control. With the ability to treat many ailments the question becomes just because you can prolong life is it in your pets' best interest to do so. The reality is all the preparation in the world is not necessarily going to make the decision to euthanize any easier when you are faced with a terminally ill or dying pet. Don't put off making these choices until you are in the middle of a crisis are forced to have to make snap decisions while you are distraught.

For some of use the decision of euthanizing is just around the corner for others it may seem far off but accident and illness can happen at anytime. Being prepared and informed is critical. Talk to your veterinarian about pet euthanasia long before it ever becomes in issue for you and your pet. Gather information to the best of your ability to help you in making this decision.

Under what circumstances should you and your vet consider pet euthanasia? Decide what your decision criteria will be and ask your vet to add this information to your pet's medical record. Making some key decisions ahead of time can make a emotional decision a little less stressful. Some questions to discuss with your veterinarian are:

- **Does your dog have a terminal illness?**
- **Is your dog in the kind of pain that cannot be significantly alleviated by medication? Will more treatment improve his quality of life, or simply maintain a poor quality of life?**
- **Can you afford treatment? Decide how much money you can afford to spend on veterinary care.**
- **Has the pet lost most bodily functions?**
- **Does he still want to eat?**
- **Ask your veterinarian what they feel is right**

Another important decision is how the procedure might be done. Would you prefer a home euthanasia or have it done in clinic? Do you want the procedure performed outside? Does your pet have a favorite blanket they would want to be cradled in? Do you want to be present when your pet is euthanized? How do you prefer to deal with your pet's remains – mass burial, burial at home, bulk cremation, or private cremation?

From the time we first bring home our pet home until the day they pass away they look to us for their care and these amazing animal love us unconditionally For many of us pet our become our family members. To euthanize a pet is a very personal decision. The question of when the time is right is one of the biggest hardest to make. People are watching and weighting, worried that they may euthanize too soon. But eventually as with all life there will be a winding down. People need to decide what quality of life they want their dog to end in. Some justify just because they looked miserable today they may not be tomorrow of a week from now. Keep in mind that as owner we may delude ourselves not seeing the full impact of that until it's at a very advanced point.

Most people feel that their pets will let them know. But in the wild animals have learned to hide weakness and pain their survival depends on it, so they endure. Unlike people they have never learned that showing pain may bring relief. If they are showing pain or discomfort, it's just an indication of how tired and depleted they are. We must assume that the discomfort we see is much less than the discomfort they really feel.

When faced with the ultimate decision about how to best serve the animal you love so much, try to set aside confusions and ups the downs that are so much a part of caring for a terminally ill or old pet. This is hard to do, because for months and often years we watching how they are eating or drinking, try to decide how much pain they may be in, what is their quality of life at some point it's time to put all of that and ask ourselves the question: "Does he want to be here today, to experience this day in this way, as much as I want him to?" If you honestly believe that his condition is such, his pleasures sufficient, then that's the answer and we press on.

If, on the other hand, you can look honestly and bravely at the situation and admit that would choose instead to rest, then you will need to find the courage to make the hard decisions to do what is best on their behalf.

Even with these tips to help you, know that grief for an animal companion is still hard work, just as it is for loss of a human companion. Give yourself permission to grieve, and know that you made the best choice you could in your particular moment. There are no right or wrong choices here. Take comfort knowing that your beloved animal wasn't and isn't judging you. Their love is unconditional.