



## Quality of Life Assessment Form

Our pets need us to be their advocates. They rely on us for everything from exercise and nutrition to medical care and of course emotional support. In return for their loyalty and love we encourage you to think unselfishly about the factors that affect and determine the quality of their life at this critical stage. Often, people attribute symptoms of illness and disease to simple 'ageing' and because they are sometimes subtle, owners are unaware that these are signs of their pet suffering. We want you to make careful and considered decisions that are always in the best interests of the pet who has generously shared their life with you. We hope this guide may help you navigate the confusion of ageing, terminal/chronic or debilitating illness and better understand your options for effective palliative care.

Below are some key attributes that help us systematically consider quality of life for your pet. As time goes on, their illness changes or their capacities reduce you may need to repeat the evaluation. Some people find it useful to fill out the assessment every day and record their results over an extended period. We have provided logs for you to do this for as long as you feel appropriate. Remember quality of life considerations are subjective but you know your pet well and you should trust your intuition when completing the chart. In some cases, this process will give you reassurance that your pet is still enjoying life, whilst in others it may make you realise your pet is suffering more than you were aware. Either way, awareness and careful observation will be your pet's best friend.

### **1. Pain:**

**1 Point** Your pet does not appear to be in pain. They are moving freely, keen for exercise and sleeping well.

**2 Points** Your pet has been assessed by a vet recently and prescribed appropriate pain relief for their condition. This medication is working well.

**3 Points** Your pet appears painful. They may be vocalising, crying, unable to rest or reluctant to move. Pain medication has been prescribed and is not working adequately or the side effects of medication are severe. Alternative therapies such as acupuncture as a pain management technique have been exhausted.

\* Note - Signs of pain can be subtle such as an elevated respiratory rate or laboured breathing, pacing in the house or yard, stiffness, difficulty sitting or standing and reluctance to exercise. Remember lameness is a definite indicator of pain even if they are still running / playing readily.

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- 2. Appetite:**
- 1 – Your pet is eating normally and their appetite is good.
  - 2 – Their appetite is reduced and they need encouragement to eat or are only eating favourite foods. They may seem to eat more slowly than usual.
  - 3 – Appetite is intermittent or even gone completely. Alternatively your pet may be keen enough to eat but there is then vomiting and nausea or diarrhoea.
- 3. Demeanour:**
- 1 – Your pet appears happy and is keen to interact with you. They greet you readily and are willing to receive attention.
  - 2 – Your pet may be a bit irritable and grumpy compared with their normal self. They are still interested in daily family activities but may also be seeking more time to themselves.
  - 3 – Hiding and avoiding interaction have become the norm. They appear depressed much of the time and no longer enjoy activities they previously did.
- 4. Mobility:**
- 1 – Energy levels are good and exercise or play is still a normal part of their day.
  - 2 – Your pet is starting to ‘slow up’ but is managing well with their prescribed medications and can happily do about half the amount of activity they could do in their youth.
  - 3 – Your pet’s mobility is dramatically reduced. This may mean they need assistance to stand and navigate the house or that they have little capacity for exercise. You may have noticed they can no longer manage stairs or get into the car by themselves.

\* Note - Mobility issues and osteoarthritis should be carefully considered when reviewing a pet’s quality of life. They can be incredibly debilitating and are often a valid reason for compassionate euthanasia, but can also often be dramatically improved by physical therapy, medication and mobility aids such as boots/ramps/lifts/etc.



5. **Hydration:**
- 1 – Water intake is normal.
  - 2 – Water intake is abnormal to some degree. In many cases drinking will increase, in others your pet will not be drinking enough.
  - 3 – Your pet’s level of hydration is inadequate and they require intervention from you (such as syringing or fluids under the skin) to get through the day. Vomiting or diarrhoea may be contributing.
6. **Weight:**
- 1 – Your pet is in an ideal body weight range and is maintaining their body condition well.
  - 2 – Your pet is an unhealthy weight however you are monitoring their body shape and change is slow.
  - 3 – Weight changes are uncontrolled and increasing or decreasing their food doesn’t seem to make any difference. You may have noticed a rapid change to their body shape such as narrowing at the hips from muscle wasting or bloating of the belly.
7. **Hygiene:**
- 1 – Toileting patterns are normal and your pet is still grooming normally.
  - 2 – You have noticed toileting is not quite normal. They may have difficulty eliminating, be urinating more frequently or passing stools that don’t look normal. You may find their personal hygiene has deteriorated and they require some assistance to keep clean.
  - 3 – Your pet is unable to toilet normally. They may have developed urinary or faecal incontinence, may be unable to get up from soiled bedding, are often less likely to groom and may go on to develop pressure sores on parts of the body. Their requirement for hygiene care has dramatically increased and is exceeding your capacity to provide it.

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- 8. Rest:**
- 1 – Your pet is sleeping normally.
  - 2 – Your pet sleeps normally most nights but has started sleeping for longer periods than before. They are occasionally disorientated or confused by where they are and who is around.
  - 3 – Your pet is unable to settle, anxious and uncomfortable when lying down. They may whimper or cry at night and require medication for a restful sleep. They are often disorientated and cannot be easily calmed.

**9. Your Personal Thoughts:**

And finally we have allowed a section for your own uncensored thoughts. This is not something we want you to score out of 3 and is purely a place for you to write your observations and concerns. Jot down notes on how you are feeling and coping as you approach these end of life questions. We know that caring can be daunting and exhausting for even the most dedicated of pet parents. You may be constantly worried about your pet or there may be tension and disagreement within the family about how to proceed. With particularly high-need pets, it is also important to give some thought to your own capacity to provide the care required and if your resources for care emotionally, financially or physically are exhausted, it might be time to consider your preparations for peaceful euthanasia.

Many owners also like to record their thoughts on whether good days are still outnumbering the bad and whether their pet is still enjoying the things that previously brought them happiness. This may be food, or walks or as simple as pats. Whatever it is, this will likely play a large role in your decisions about your pets care.

# Esk Veterinary Services Fernvale Vet Surgery



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## Today's Assessment

Item	Please Circle Your Pet's Score			Collective Total
Pain	1	2	3	
Appetite	1	2	3	
Demeanour/Willingness to Interact	1	2	3	
Mobility	1	2	3	
Hydration	1	2	3	
Weight/Condition	1	2	3	
Toileting	1	2	3	
Rest	1	2	3	
Your Thoughts				
				<b>Today's Score</b>

<b>&lt;10 = Your pet's quality of life is likely within an acceptable range. Keep monitoring for change or deterioration in your pet's condition.</b>	<b>10 – 20 = There are some causes for concern and your vet may be able to suggest interventions that could improve your pet's quality of life.</b>	<b>20 – 25 = Your pet appears to be suffering and quality of life is poor. Discuss these results with your vet as soon as possible.</b>
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