

Time to say goodbye?

One of the hardest parts of being a pet owner is being able to determine if your pet's quality of life has deteriorated to the point you need to consider a compassionate farewell. These questions can help guide you.*

Multiple points of view

- When you consider your pet's situation, evaluate him or her at different times of the day. It is not uncommon for many pets to do worse at night and better during the day.
- Request multiple members of the family observe the pet and compare their perspectives.
- Continue to take photos of your pet to help document physical changes that may occur slowly.

Basic functions

- Does your pet spend a lot more time sleeping than before?
- Have you noticed a change in appetite?
- Do even treats seem less "interesting?"
- Is there a change in water consumption?
- Have your pet's bathroom habits changed, especially in frequency or ability to access the litter box?



Social functions

- Has your pet's desire to be with the family decreased?
- Does your pet interact normally with family members, both human and other pets?

Physical health

- Are there greater signs of pain? This can include excessive panting, pacing, and whining.
- Have you seen changes in breathing or panting patterns?
- Has your pet's mobility changed for the worse, even with medication?
- Does your pet still partake in normal play activities, with toys or others?



Mental health

- Does your pet still show interest in household goings-on and activities?
- Are there outward signs of stress or anxiety?
- Does your pet seem confused?
- Are you seeing behavior changes specifically at night?

Involve your veterinarian

Your pet's quality of life typically fits one of the following categories.* Enlist your vet as a compassionate third party to help determine your pet's current status.

- Quality of life is most likely adequate. No medical intervention required yet.
- Quality of life is questionable and medical intervention is suggested.
- Quality of life is a definite concern. Changes will likely become more progressive and more severe in the near future.



Practice self-care, as well

When the time comes where you are considering ending suffering for your pet, don't forget to take care of your own well-being.

- Many veterinarians strongly recommend the owner be present when their pet receives euthanasia. It is the kindest final act you can do to say farewell to your beloved pet; and have your own support system at the ready.
- Choose to talk to friends and relatives who truly understand a pet is a family member; not everyone "gets that."
- Consider enlisting the help of a therapist or counselor who has experience helping those grieving or with anticipatory grief.

* To see the full Quality of Life scale, as well as additional questions and considerations, and support resources, visit www.lapoflove.com.