

## Euthanasia

Euthanasia is often a blessing and gift to a suffering animal. Making this decision is never an easy one but when the time comes to make the decision for our loved one, we need to think with our heads and put our hearts aside. Here are some of the best pieces of advice we can offer when faced with a terminally ill companion.

***Every pet, illness, and situation is different.*** There is no single rule that can be followed for when it is time to help your best friend "cross the rainbow bridge." Getting input from your veterinarian on the specific medical conditions that your loved one may face is vital for doing what is best for your pet. You may also benefit from having a caring friend who is not as emotionally involved in the situation as you are to help you gain perspective and really "see" what is happening with your pet.

***Remember that pets live in the moment.*** One of the most wonderful things about animals is how they embrace the present. The fact that I have entered the house thousands of times before, or that I will leave again in a few hours, means nothing. All that matters to him is the joy that he feels right now. When our pets are suffering, they don't reflect on all the great days they have had before, or ponder what the future will bring. All they know is how they feel today. By considering this perspective, we can see the world more clearly through their eyes. And their eyes are what matter.

***Good Days vs. Bad*** When pets have "good days and bad days," it can be difficult to see how their condition is progressing over time. Actually tracking the days when your pet is feeling good as well as the days when he or she is not feeling well can be helpful. A check mark for good days and an X for bad days on your calendar can help you determine when a loved one is having more bad days than good.

***Ask yourself important questions.*** Sometimes, articulating or writing down your thoughts can make the right path more apparent. Some questions that help pet owners struggling with this decision include:

- Why do I think it might be time to euthanize?
- What are my fears and concerns about euthanizing?
- Whose interests, besides those of my pet, am I taking into account?
- What are the concerns of the people around me?
- Am I making this decision because it is best for my pet, or because it is best for me because I'm not ready to let go?

***Measure their quality of life.*** This is no more than trying to determine how good or bad our pet's life is at this moment. Trying to assess this can be difficult, but there are some ways you can try and evaluate it. Pick the top five things that your pet loves to do. Write them down. When he or she can no longer do three or more of them, quality of life has been impacted to a level where many veterinarians would recommend euthanasia.

