

Quality of Life Scale

Alice Villalobos. From *Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond*. Ames, IA. Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Revised for the International Veterinary Association of Pain Management 2011 Palliative Care and Hospice Guidelines.

...It's not easy, but by breaking down the decision about ending your cat's life into meaningful components and giving them a numerical score, it may sharpen your thinking. Each category is to be scored from 0 to 10, with 10 being ideal:

_____ **0 – 10 HURT.** Adequate pain control, including breathing ability, is the first and foremost consideration. Is the cat's pain successfully managed? Is oxygen necessary?

_____ **0 – 10 HUNGER.** Is the cat eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the patient require a feeding tube?

_____ **0 – 10 HYDRATION.** Is the patient dehydrated? For cats not drinking or eating foods containing enough water, use subcutaneous fluids once or twice daily to supplement fluid intake.

_____ **0 – 10 HYGIENE.** The patient should be kept brushed and cleaned. This is paramount for cats with oral cancer. Check the body for soiling after elimination. Avoid pressure sores and keep all wounds clean.

_____ **0 -10 HAPPINESS.** Does the cat express joy and interest? Is the cat responsive to things around him (family, toys, etc.)? Does the cat purr when scratched or petted? Is the cat depressed, lonely, anxious, bored, afraid? Can the cat's bed be near the kitchen and moved near family activities so as not to be isolated?

_____ **0 – 10 MOBILITY.** Can the cat get up without help? Is the cat having seizures or stumbling? Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to a definitive surgery, yet cats are resilient. Cats with limited mobility may still be alert and responsive and can have a good quality of life if the family is committed to providing quality care.

_____ **0 – 10 MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD.** When bad days outnumber good days, quality of life for the dying cat might be too compromised. When a healthy human-animal bond is no longer possible, caregivers must be made aware that their duty is to protect their cat from pain by making the final call for euthanasia. The decision needs to be made if the cat has unresponsive suffering. If death comes peacefully and painlessly at home, that is okay.

_____ **TOTAL.** A total score over thirty-five is acceptable quality of life for maintaining a good feline hospice.

Hospice care can be a compassionate alternative for cat owners who simply aren't ready to turn out the light, but whose cats are suffering and are never going to get better. There are several organizations that can help you find a good hospice.