



How Do I Know It's Time?

Deciding when to euthanize your pet can be a very emotional and confusing time. Discomfort about having to make such a choice, guilt over whether we are deciding too soon or too late, and sadness for the loss to come make us doubt that we can make a wise decision.

Our natural inclination is to feel that we should be able to fix a beloved pet's problems; that with enough medical care and time they will improve. Often we will focus on a good moment in what was otherwise a not so good day and hope that things are turning around. Truthfully, illness or age-related changes are often too debilitating and our companions depend on us to set aside our own emotions and focus on what will be best for them.

You know your pet better than anyone and you are the best judge of when your pet's quality of life has diminished. Below is a list of symptoms that your pet may be exhibiting. See how many of these statements are true today as compared to a month or even a week ago. Pets will have up and down days, but watch for more bad days than good. Remember, there is not going to be an "exact" right time.

MOBILITY

- Needs help more frequently to get up
- Struggles to walk on own
- Falls/ collapses more often
- Increasing difficulty climbing stairs, jumping on sofa
- Lies in the same position for long times
- Can't get outside (or in litter box) to urinate, defecate, has accidents in bed or at the door
- Muscle wasting in hind limbs



ATTITUDE

- Pacing for long periods of time
- Increased anxiety at night, restless/whining (Sundowner Syndrome)
- Doesn't seek out family members or engage with other pets
- No longer enjoys normal routines: playing with toys, going for walks
- Cats- isolating in another room, closet, under the bed

- Frequent vocalizing/ barking at night
- Changes in sleep patterns- up at night, sleeps most of the day

APPETITE

- Eats only with owner assistance or coaxing, taking a few licks
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Vomits and/or has diarrhea chronically
- Shows good appetite but weight is dropping
- Has not eaten for 2-3 consecutive days
- Shows interest in food but won't eat (nausea)

PAIN

- Shows resistance to being moved, growls when handled or helped up
- Shows difficulty getting up or down
- Often stands rather than lying down
- Paces, unable to settle in one spot, especially at night
- Cats- "Meatloaf" position (sitting sternal with head hanging, paws tucked underneath)
- Obsessive licking of a limb
- Whimpering, moaning (most pets will not make any sounds until they are in severe pain)
- Requiring higher dosages of pain medications to be "comfortable"
- Fluid building up in abdomen, belly looking distended



HYGIENE

- Cats- no longer grooming, oily unkempt fur, mats
- Urinates or defecates on self, requires frequent cleanup
- Strong urine odor (possible urinary tract infection)
- Difficult to keep clean and dry, develops skin sores or rashes

BREATHING

- Increased respiratory effort with movement
- Cannot rest/sleep on side- sitting on sternum
- Labored breathing/deep breaths (may be using abdominal muscles), short rapid breathing

***NOTE-** labored breathing is **ALWAYS** an indicator that the pet is in distress and needs immediate assistance

You can repeat this assessment in the coming days or weeks, comparing each time to your previous findings. Seek input from other family members, or close friends who have known and loved your pet as they might see changes that you may not notice. And confer with your regular or referral veterinarian for valuable input as well.

Remember that you are not alone during this difficult time. We are here to answer your questions and provide support and advice. Our goal is to give you the peace of mind that comes with knowing that you are making the best possible choice at the best possible time for your beloved pet.

Best Wishes,

Dr. Robin Holmes
Dr. Elizabeth Craig

Gifts of Peace Home Pet Euthanasia
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