

## Assessing a pet's quality of life

### When is it time to let go?

Your pet's health comprises two elements: the physical and the psychological. Below are some questions that can help you assess your pet's quality of life.

#### Physical

- Are they eating and drinking well?
- Are they able to walk, urinate, defecate and groom on their own?
- Are they able to have a restful sleep?

#### Psychological

- Do they still have the same level of interaction with the family?
- Do they still have a reasonable level of control over their environment?
- Are they able to enjoy their usual routine?
- Are they coping with the stress of ill health well? (such as urine soiling, ability to climb stairs.)

### Is your pet in pain?

Here are some signs to look for:

- trembling
- panting
- increased heart rate
- vocalizing
- restlessness
- limping
- slow to rise
- reluctant to move
- change in energy level
- hesitant to touch
- acting out of character (you know them best)

### Is your pet suffering?

Remember, suffering doesn't necessarily mean in pain. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Is your pet still affectionate and playful?
- Are they still interested in daily activities?
- Are they engaged with the family and interactive or tired, withdrawn or hiding?
- Is your pet experiencing more bad days than good days?
- How has your relationship with your pet changed?
- How are you coping? Caring for a sick pet is hard work and takes its toll physically, emotionally, and financially. How is your quality of life?

### Develop a personal bottom line.

- What makes life worth living for your pet?
- At what point do you think life would no longer be worth living (under what circumstances)?
- Record this (possibly in a journal) in order to revisit later in case you may be in an emotional crisis