



Pet-Loss & Grief

Euthanasia

When is it time?

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As a general rule, it's usually better to go for euthanasia sooner rather than later since waiting too long can mean more unnecessary suffering. Figuring out when the right time is really comes down to you and your family—it's a personal choice. It's important to pay attention to what your pet is telling you through their behavior and demeanor, and talking it through with friends, family and your veterinarian.

Some pet owners believe that their pets will 'let them know when the time is right,' but that isn't true for everyone. Sadly, pets don't always give us clear signals to let us know when it's time or that they're 'ready to pass on.' So, it's up to us to make that call by thinking about questions like:

How much do you think your pet is still enjoying life? Do they still seem happy? Is their overall quality of life still decent? Here are some things to think about:

- ✦ Signs of discomfort
- ✦ Appetite
- ✦ Mobility
- ✦ Urinary/bowel control
- ✦ Mental sharpness/confusion
- ✦ Breathing effort

What's the outlook for any illnesses your pet has? Are there treatment options available, and if so, how invasive or uncomfortable are they likely to be?

Is treatment really in your pet's best interest, or might it just add more stress than the condition itself? While it might prolong their life, will treatment actually improve their quality of life?

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Continued

You should talk through these questions with your vet as much as possible and ask for advice on what signs and stages of illness to watch for. While it's not always straightforward, it's often possible to get a sense of your pet's quality of life over time and see if they're having more bad days than good ones. Being well-informed about the illness and knowing what to look for can help you decide ahead of time on a point that signals when to consider euthanasia, which can help minimize your pet's suffering. For example, it might be when they haven't eaten for a whole day or can't exercise without struggling to breathe. Some pet owners make a list of the fun activities their pet loves at the beginning of their illness; they regularly check this list to see how many of those activities their pet can still enjoy (and remember, new hobbies can pop up too) and use it to help guide their decision about the right time for euthanasia.

For sick pets, another key thing to think about is the cost of any available treatments. If you feel you can't afford the treatment, it's totally understandable for this to be a factor in your decision about euthanasia. In the end, it's not good for you or your pet if you start a treatment that you can't afford to finish, so try not to feel guilty or worry about being judged if money plays a big role in your choice.

At the end of the day, the choice to have your pet euthanized should focus on what's best for them, considering realistic expectations about their health and what can actually be done. Remember, euthanasia provides peace and relief from pain and suffering for your beloved companion.

