

Consideration for End of Life

PURPOSE

This document defines the policy and procedures for considering medical euthanasia of APA! animals.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all APA! Staff and volunteers

POLICY

This procedure is to be considered for animals where quality of life has deteriorated or the animal has known conditions and are no longer responding to treatments.

PROCEDURES

1. Diminishing Quality of Life

The decision to euthanize should not be made lightly. APA! will continue to evaluate the condition of the animal as long as there are options remaining to evaluate.

Any one of the following items will trigger consideration for euthanasia by an APA! Veterinarian:

- No response to treatment for rule outs with potential for favorable prognosis
- Remaining symptoms or conditions are both severe and non-treatable
- Not able to maintain weight despite intervening measures
- Withdrawing from family or much less social than usual

Please note, these items are a trigger for consideration, not the final determining factor. The QOL Scale will be used for evaluation and decision making.

2. APA! Treatment Disclaimer

APA! makes every attempt possible to provide basic care and comfort to animals that otherwise do not have access to it. We do not, however, provide heroic or drastic lifesaving measures for terminally ill animals.

3. Notifying Staff/Volunteers (on site animals only)

- A. Clinic will notify Dog Program Manager and Director of Life Saving Operations that an animal is being evaluated for QOL.
- B. Dog Program Manager will determine which of the dog's main caretakers or friends need to be contacted.
- C. Dog Program Manager will contact caretakers/friends (the closest 1-3 people to the animal) to notify them that the animal is being evaluated for QOL and to request their observations. These same people will be provided with the Quality of Life Scale. They will submit the QOL scale forms to the clinic for consideration.
- D. If/when the final decision is made, Clinic will notify the Dog Program Manager and Director of Life Saving Operations to coordinate a date/time. Dog Program Manager will notify the friends established in prior steps. These friends can notify any further people who would prefer to attend.

4. Quality of Life Scale

Score	Criterion
TOTAL	A total over 35 points represents acceptable life quality to continue life as is.
0-10	HURT Adequate pain control & breathing ability is of top concern. Trouble breathing outweighs all concerns. Is the pet's pain well managed? Can the pet breathe properly? Is oxygen supplementation necessary?
0-10	HUNGER Is the pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the pet need a feeding tube?
0-10	HYDRATION Is the pet dehydrated? For patients not drinking enough water, use subcutaneous fluids daily or twice daily to supplement fluid intake.
0-10	HYGIENE The pet should be brushed and cleaned, particularly after eliminations. Avoid pressure sores with soft bedding and keep all wounds clean.
0-10	HAPPINESS Does the pet express joy and interest? Is the pet responsive to family, toys, etc.? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored or afraid? Can the pet's bed be moved to be close to family activities?
0-10	MOBILITY Can the pet get up without assistance? Does the pet need human or mechanical help (e.g., a cart)? Does the pet feel like going for a walk? Is the pet having seizures or stumbling? (Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, but an animal with limited mobility yet still alert, happy and responsive can have a good quality of life as long as caregivers are committed to helping their pet.)
0-10	MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD When bad days outnumber good days, quality of life might be too compromised. When a healthy human-animal bond is no longer possible, the caregiver must be made aware that the end is near. The decision for euthanasia needs to be made if the pet is suffering. If death comes peacefully and painlessly at home, that is okay.