

Quality of Life Scale — The HHHHHMM Scale

Developed by Dr. Alice Villalobos, DVM¹

Pet caregivers can use this scale to gauge how their pet is doing. Score each criterion from 1 to 10 (10 is best), then add the scores together.

Criterion	Considerations	Score (1–10)
HURT	Adequate pain control, including breathing ability, is first and foremost on the scale. Is the pet's pain successfully managed? Is oxygen supplementation necessary?	
HUNGER	Is the pet eating enough? Does hand feeding help? Does the patient require a feeding tube?	
HYDRATION	Is the patient dehydrated? For patients not drinking enough, use subcutaneous fluids once or twice daily to supplement fluid intake.	
HYGIENE	The patient should be brushed and cleaned, particularly after elimination. Avoid pressure sores and keep all wounds clean.	
HAPPINESS	Does the pet express joy and interest? Is the pet responsive to things around him or her (family, toys, etc.)? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored, or afraid? Can the pet's bed be close to family activities and not isolated?	
MOBILITY	Can the patient 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, yet an animal with limited mobility who is still alert and responsive can have a good quality of life as long as caregivers are committed to helping the pet.)	
MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD	When bad days outnumber good days, quality of life might be compromised. When a healthy human-animal bond is no longer possible, the caregiver must be made aware the end is near. The decision needs to be made if the pet is suffering. If death comes peacefully and painlessly, that is okay.	

*TOTAL: A total score above 35 generally represents an acceptable quality of life. This scale is a tool to support conversations with your veterinarian — it does not replace veterinary evaluation, especially for pain assessment or end-of-life decisions.

1. Developed by Dr. Alice Villalobos, DVM, DACVIM, DPMP — Villalobos, A. "Quality of Life Scale — Helping You Make Toughest Decisions." https://sahumane.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/quality_of_life_to_the_end_of_life_villalobos.pdf