Quality of Life Assessment
for Cats

A compassionate guide to understanding comfort, function, and next steps in care



When a beloved cat is aging, declining, or facing a serious illness, it can be difficult to know what to do next. This Quality of Life Assessment can help you better understand your cat's comfort, daily function, and changing needs—and identify what type of support may be appropriate next.

One of the hardest parts of loving a cat is recognizing when their quality of life has changed significantly. Many families feel caught between acting too soon and waiting too long. You may be wondering:

- *Is my cat's quality of life getting worse?*
- *Can these changes be managed with additional care or support?*
- *Are we nearing the point where euthanasia should be considered?*
- *Are they comfortable?*
- *Is it time to schedule a consultation?*

How the Assessment Can Help

The assessment is not intended to lead you toward a particular decision. It offers a structured way to consider the day-to-day signs that matter most, organize your observations, and better understand what your cat may be experiencing and what type of support may make sense next.

A Fuller Family Perspective

If more than one person cares for your cat, consider having each person complete the assessment separately. Family members may notice different changes in appetite, behavior, mobility, breathing, or restlessness. Comparing your observations can provide a fuller picture of your cat's quality of life and help your family make a more informed decision together.

About This Assessment

Caring Pathways veterinary leaders developed this Quality of Life Assessment with input from end-of-life care veterinarians who participated in the research supporting its development. Caring Pathways specializes in hospice, palliative care, quality-of-life support, and in-home euthanasia.

Understanding Your Results

After completing the assessment, add your answers to determine your total score. Your score will place your cat into one of four general quality-of-life categories and provide guidance about possible next steps.

Quality of Life Category	Score	What the Result May Mean
Stable Quality of Life	75 or higher	***Most indicators suggest that your cat is experiencing good quality of life, with stable comfort and enjoyment.***
Early Care & Planning	56-74	***Quality of life is likely adequate, but support is still helpful:*** Your cat appears to have more good days than bad, though some areas may need attention. This is an appropriate time to strengthen comfort care and monitor symptoms.
Consultation Recommended	21-55	***Comfort care is needed:*** Your cat is facing notable challenges, and their comfort may be declining. Decisions about the next care steps are important and should not be delayed.
End-of-Life Support Recommended	0-20	***Your cat may be suffering:*** Scores in this range suggest that your cat may be experiencing ongoing discomfort or distress. This can indicate that their quality of life may be significantly impacted.

Important: *This assessment does not replace veterinary evaluation or medical advice. It can help you organize your observations and have a more productive conversation with your veterinarian.*

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A. Questions about your cat's daily living activities.

	Does not describe my situation	Somewhat describes my situation	Definitely describes my situation
1. My cat has trouble settling down to sleep at night.			
2. My cat is waking me *(or someone in the family)* at night.			
3. My cat's sleep appears to be impacted by breathing difficulties.			
4. My cat no longer consistently uses the litter box for urination.			
5. My cat no longer consistently uses the litter box for defecation.			
6. My cat is experiencing changes in their urination habits *(urinating more or less frequently than their normal).*			
7. My cat is breathing heavily or open-mouthed breathing at rest *(i.e., panting)*.			
8. My cat appears out of breath from their activities of daily living *(urination, defecation, walking)*.			
9. My cat's appetite has changed from their normal.			
10. I am having to spend more time encouraging my cat to eat or drink than I have in the past.			
11. My cat has trouble picking up and chewing food normally.			
12. My cat's drinking habits have changed.			
13. My cat has been more irritable with the family or other pets in the home.			
14. My cat has bitten a family member or other pets in the home.			
15. My cat has become more or less affectionate than in the past.			
16. My cat has been more withdrawn from the family and/or other pets in the home.			

B. Questions about your cat's mental status and behavior.

	Does not describe my situation	Somewhat describes my situation	Definitely describes my situation
1. My cat seems unsure of their surroundings.			
2. My cat is more vocal at inappropriate times or in unusual situations.			
3. My cat no longer interacts with our family as it normally has.			

C. Questions about your cat's general health.

	Does not describe my situation	Somewhat describes my situation	Definitely describes my situation
1. My cat has a confirmed or suspected organ failure diagnosis *(kidney failure, heart failure, liver failure, etc)*.			
2. My cat has a confirmed or suspected cancer diagnosis.			
3. My cat is sneezing, coughing, or wheezing enough to interrupt daily life.			
4. My cat is vomiting or regurgitating enough to interrupt daily life.			
5. My cat's fur/coat has changed enough to interrupt daily life.			
6. My cat is experiencing unintentional weight loss *(or gain)*.			

D. Questions about your cat's mobility and comfort.

	Does not describe my situation	Somewhat describes my situation	Definitely describes my situation
1. Some of my cat's daily activities *(urination, defecation, eating, drinking, grooming, walking, sleeping)* seem to be more difficult for them.			
2. My cat's activity levels have changed from their normal levels.			
3. My cat's preferences regarding being indoors or outdoors have changed.			
4. My cat's facial expressions *(ear position, muzzle/eye tension, or head/whisker position)* differ from their previous normal.			
5. My cat's willingness to play has decreased.			
6. My cat's willingness or ability to climb stairs *(up or down)*, or jump to a couch, bed, or counter-height surface has decreased.			
7. My cat has noticeable gait abnormalities *(ex: limping, abnormal posture, slower walking speed, sitting frequently to rest, etc)*.			
8. My cat is less tolerant of brushing or grooming than it has been, or their self-grooming habits have changed.			

E. Questions about your relationship with your cat.

	Does not describe my situation	Somewhat describes my situation	Definitely describes my situation
1. My cat's current health status or required level of care is impacting one or more caregivers' relationship with my cat.			
2. I feel guilty that I cannot do more for my cat.			
3. Changes in my cat's elimination habits are impacting one or more caregivers' relationship with my cat.			
4. My ability *(or inability)* to sleep is impacting one or more caregivers' relationship with my cat.			
5. My cat's care is causing financial stress for me or other caregivers.			
6. I feel more frustrated when I am around my cat than before.			
7. I have fears and/or anxiety about my cat's condition or care.			
8. I feel more reluctant to discuss my cat's current situation with friends, neighbors, etc.			
9. Changes in my cat's eating habits are impacting caregiver relationships with my cat.			

Add all of the selections in the '*Does not*' and '*Somewhat*' columns and enter the total number here			
Multiply the totals by the displayed number to calculate the column score	x 2	x 1	
Column scores	+		=
Add the column scores and enter the **total score**			

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