

## Peaceful

### The Quality of Dying Checklist for Hospice-Supported Natural Dying

This checklist is designed to determine acceptable quality of life to continue the normal dying process.



Hospice care is skilled comfort care to the end of a life wherein death is neither hastened nor postponed.

In those exceptions when patient comfort cannot be adequately maintained or the caregiver's emotional, physical, financial or other resources are insufficient, animal hospice care can be ended by euthanasia.

P	E	A	C	E	F	U	L
PAIN	EMACIATION	APPETITE & THIRST	COMFORT	ELEVENTH HOUR WHAT ELSE MAY BE GOING ON	FLUID	UNRESPONSIVE	LOW ENERGY/ LISTLESS
<p>Dying does not cause pain; disease causes pain.</p> <p>Adequate pain control is most important. Strong, fast-acting pain medication (in a preparation that does not require swallowing) is to be kept on hand in case of sudden need. A sublingual route is preferred.</p> <p>Keep in mind that animals in their final stages often need considerably lower doses of medications per body weight than they previously did.</p> <p>If the disease process is prone to create, or has already created a need for oxygen supplementation, oxygen for home use must be kept on hand.</p>	<p>Substantial loss of body weight is normal at the end of life and generally does not constitute discomfort to the patient.</p>	<p>Decreasing appetite is normal during the dying process, often preceding a lack of thirst. Neither is to be confused with the reversible symptoms of a treatable condition. Consult your hospice-trained veterinarian. For the dying body, digestion is no longer a priority. The scent of food can cause nausea, so keep food out of the room unless it is offered. Offer different food choices periodically, including by finger or syringe, until rejected. Do the same with water. Complete disinterest is to be accepted. Avoid giving food or water in the absence of interest or after the swallowing reflex has ceased as it may cause considerable discomfort or choking. Consider that appetite may wax and wane.</p>	<p>Keep the patient's environment clean, quiet and stress free.</p> <p>It is essential that caregivers remain as calm and present as possible.</p> <p>Keep anti-anxiety medicine on hand in case terminal restlessness occurs.</p> <p>Maintain comfort and dignity via basic hygiene during the process of dying; i.e. very gently clean up any bodily discharges that may occur.</p>	<p>Eyes may be glassy or dull. Lips, gums and anus may also be pale.</p> <p>Extremities may be cooler. Paddling of front legs may be observed.</p> <p>There may be localized, light muscle twitching.</p> <p>Bladder and/or bowels may empty.</p> <p>Irregular breathing may occur. If congestion is present, keep the nostrils clean.</p> <p>Backward arching of the head and neck may be seen.</p> <p>Keep the patient's environment quiet and clean!</p>	<p>Dehydration progresses; endorphins* are released by the brain, promoting comfort.</p> <p>The mouth can be kept moistened with drops of lukewarm water from a syringe, dropper or moistened applicator.</p> <p>Subcutaneous fluids may be helpful, to a certain point, along the process.</p> <p>Consult with your hospice-trained veterinarian.</p>	<p>For many animals, interest in the immediate environment dwindles at the end of life as focus turns inward.</p> <p>Some animals may remain responsive and somewhat interactive until late stages.</p> <p>Restlessness may occur as the animal experiences changes occurring in his/her body.</p> <p>In case of increasing agitation give low dosed medicine already supplied by your hospice-trained veterinarian.</p>	<p>As life energy dwindles, most animals will be recumbent at the end of life, resting quietly and peacefully the majority of the time.</p>

*Gratitude and Respect for Animals and Their Care at End of Life (GRACE) Consortium Founders: Dr. Ella Bittel, Spirits in Transition: [www.spiritsintransition.org/](http://www.spiritsintransition.org/); Dr. Kathryn Marocchino, The Nikki Hospice Foundation: <http://www.pethospice.org/>; Gail Pope, BrightHaven: <http://www.brighthaven.org/>.*

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