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A VET'S WORKBOOK

The Quality-of-Life Decision Pack

A scoring sheet, the eight questions, and the five sentences you may want to read back to yourself in week two.

Dr. NRS · GoodDeath.in

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ABOUT THIS PACK

How to use it

This is a workbook, not a verdict. It does not tell you whether to euthanise your animal. It gives you a structure for the conversation with your vet, your family, and yourself.

Read through it once before you fill in anything. Then come back, weekly, with a pen. Score on the same day at the same time. The trend line is what informs the decision — the snapshot is anchoring.

If you are reading this in the second week of grief after a decision already made, skip to page 18 — the five sentences. They were written for you.

Editorial reference, not veterinary advice. Use alongside your treating vet, not instead of one.

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The framework, in one paragraph

A good death is one that prevents more suffering than it causes. The animal's suffering is what we measure. The owner's grief is real but not in the calculation. The vet's discomfort is irrelevant. The decision is yours; the protocol is theirs; the witness is the family. Everything in this workbook is a way of converting that paragraph into a date.

The HHHHMM scoring rubric

Seven axes. Each scored 0–10, where 10 is normal healthy function and 0 is severe distress or absence. Total ranges 0–70.

Score weekly, same day, same time. The trend matters more than the number.

Hurt — Pain, including breathing distress.

Hunger — Eating willingly, holding weight.

Hydration — Drinking; mucous membranes moist.

Hygiene — Clean, dry, no sores; able to self-clean.

Happiness — Engagement; response to family.

Mobility — Rising, walking, posture.

More good than bad — The week-on-week ratio. The hardest one to score honestly.

Threshold: a total above 35 is generally considered acceptable quality of life. Below 35 warrants the conversation. But always look at the lowest single axis. An animal scoring 0 in Hurt has a quality-of-life problem regardless of how it scores in Hygiene and Happiness. The average misleads.

Four-week tracker

Score weekly, same day, in pen. Total at the bottom. Note one observation in the margin.

AXIS	WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4
Hurt	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hunger	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hydration	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hygiene	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Happiness	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Mobility	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
More good	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
TOTAL /70	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Margin space below — one short sentence per week. What changed?

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

03 CONT.

A second four-week block

Most owners need eight to twelve weeks of data before the answer becomes legible.

AXIS	WK 5	WK 6	WK 7	WK 8
Hurt	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hunger	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hydration	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Hygiene	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Happiness	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Mobility	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
More good	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
TOTAL /70	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

The eight questions

Take this list to the appointment. A vet who answers all eight clearly is a vet to book. A vet who deflects two or more is a vet to politely decline.

1. What sedation will you use, at what dose?

Specific answer expected (e.g. xylazine + ketamine IM, then propofol IV). Vagueness is a flag.

2. Will you confirm unconsciousness before the lethal injection?

Correct answer: yes, with a stated test (toe pinch, palpebral reflex).

3. What lethal agent do you use, and why?

Pentobarbital is gold standard. T-61 is acceptable. A vet who cannot answer should not be the one administering it.

4. Can I be present throughout?

Correct answer: yes, without conditions.

5. How long will the appointment last?

< 30 min is rushed. 45–60 is appropriate. 90+ for complex cases.

6. What happens if IV access fails?

Correct answer: calm escalation to intracardiac in a fully unconscious animal. Not multiple distressing attempts.

7. What does cremation cost and how is it arranged?

A clear itemised number. Communal vs individual. Memento options.

8. Can I see the consent form in advance?

A vet who declines is a vet to walk away from. Adequate forms name drugs, doses, and disposition.

The family conversation script

A short, structured way to talk to a partner, an adult sibling, or a teenage child. Read aloud. Take turns. No rebuttals during the first round.

Round one — what each person sees

“What I see when I look at her this week is _____. Last month I saw _____. The change I notice most is _____.”

Round two — what each person fears

“What I am afraid of, if we wait, is _____. What I am afraid of, if we act now, is _____.”

Round three — what each person wants the day to look like

“If today were the day, what would I want it to look like? Where? Who is in the room? What music? Who tells the children?”

After the three rounds, write down the three most important sentences anyone said. Read them aloud. Decide nothing in this conversation. Sleep. Decide tomorrow.

On the day — a checklist

1. Eat something. The body forgets to ask.
2. Designate a non-primary owner to handle door, paperwork, and any practical interruptions.
3. Confirm the protocol with the vet on arrival — sedation first, deep unconsciousness confirmed, then the agent.
4. Sit where the animal can see you. Speak normally. Do not whisper — many animals panic at the unfamiliar tone.
5. Bring water for yourself. Tissues for everyone.
6. After the heart stops, the body may twitch or sigh. This is reflex, not experience. Vets warn families because it is unsettling without context.
7. Stay with the animal for as long as you need. Five minutes. Twenty. There is no clock.
8. Plan nothing for the next twelve hours.

The five sentences

In the second week of grief after the decision, the mind tries to undo the decision. These five sentences were written for that week. Read whichever one applies. Write your own underneath.

1. I made the decision in possession of the best information I had at the time, and the animal is no longer suffering.

2. The guilt I feel is the cost of being the one who decided. It is not evidence that the decision was wrong.

3. A delayed death is not a kinder death. It is a longer death.

4. My animal did not want me to be in pain on their behalf. They did not want anything on my behalf. They wanted, at the end, what I gave them.

5. I will miss them in their absence the way I loved them in their presence — completely, and without correction.

Further reading

On the framework:

- When to euthanise a dog with cancer — gooddeath.in/blog/when-to-euthanise-a-dog-with-cancer
- Signs your pet is ready to die — gooddeath.in/blog/signs-your-pet-is-ready-to-die
- HHHHHMM scoring — gooddeath.in/blog/quality-of-life-scoring-hhhhhmm

On the procedure:

- Is pet euthanasia painful? — gooddeath.in/blog/is-pet-euthanasia-painful
- Cost across India, US, UK, Canada — gooddeath.in/blog/cost-of-pet-euthanasia-india-us-uk-canada

On the days after:

- Grief after pet euthanasia — gooddeath.in/blog/grief-after-pet-euthanasia
- The Grief Companion (book) — gooddeath.in/shop/the-grief-companion

For India:

- Pet euthanasia laws in India — gooddeath.in/blog/pet-euthanasia-laws-in-india
- Why India needs a Right-to-Death Act for animals — gooddeath.in/blog/why-india-needs-right-to-death-act-animals

For 1-on-1 support: Dr. NRS runs eight 45-minute consults a week, in English, “TM?’%oM’i@, or šÉ¾4~)²>ââ &öö² B vööF consult.

COLOPHON

About this pack

Author: Dr. Nirmalya Ranjan Sarkar (Dr. NRS), veterinary surgeon. Editorial home: gooddeath.in.
Publisher: Zoe Publications.

Set in Times for body, Helvetica for navigation. Designed for A4 / US Letter. Workbook pages benefit from being printed; reference material reads cleanly on phone or tablet.

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