



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Animal Care Expo Online

The meaning of (quality of) life

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Goals

- Provide an overview of QoL in companion animals
 - Show why QoL is important and that it can and should be measured
 - Emphasis on pets with families but concepts apply to sheltered animals too
- Give some resources for adding a QoL assessment to your programs

What is Quality of Life (QoL) in humans?





World Health Organization

“An individuals’ perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the persons’ physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment.”

WHOQOL Group, 1995

Quality of life is.....

multidimensional
individual
health dynamic
relationships + subjective
mental status
circumstances
functionality

What is QoL in animals?



The Five Freedoms

Freedom from
hunger and thirst

Freedom
from discomfort

Freedom from
pain injury or
disease

Freedom from
fear and distress

Freedom to
express normal
behavior

How to think about QoL in pets

Adapt concepts from the human field

We know there are challenges to this

Considering companion animals QoL is useful and should be a regular part of care

Common Aspects of QoL for Companion Animals

Mobility

Happiness

Pain

Physical health and functions

Hygiene

Relationships with animals, family

Engagement

Energy

Play

Comfort

Environment

Caregiver QoL

How can assessing QoL in companion animals be useful?



Routine Care

- Increase communication and rapport with stakeholders
- Early diagnosis of problems
- Monitor age-related decline overtime
- Identify and share information on how to improve areas of QoL

Healthcare Decision Making

- Cost/benefit of treatment options
- Monitor disease progression
- Monitor success of treatment or other intervention
- End-of-life decisions

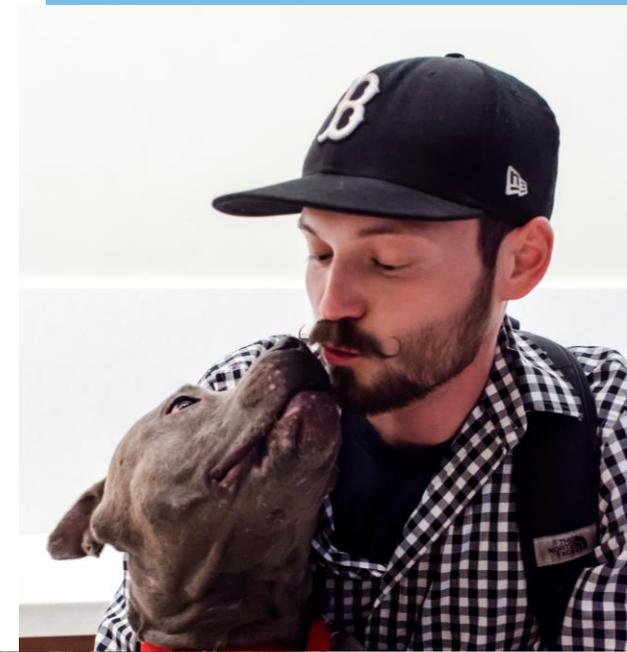
Program Evaluation and Veterinary Research

- Are your interventions making a difference in the lives of the pets you serve?
- Patient-centered outcome in veterinary research
 - complement to more traditional outcome assessment like clinical signs

Shelter Care

- Monitor animal QoL overtime
- Inform decisions about
 - Care
 - Enrichment
 - Treatment
 - Pathway through the sheltering process
- Help determine the most appropriate and humane outcome for each animal

How do we measure QoL in companion animals?



Practical Approach

Use
established
measure

- Try to pick one that matches your needs

Use a proxy
informant

- Ask people who know the animal well

Remember it is
an
approximation

- It's never going to be perfect and that is ok!

What tools are available?

There is no standard, well tested tool

Most tools focus on disease

Fewer tools focus on cats

HHHHMM Scale

(Villalobos et al., 2007)

- For aging or seriously ill animals
- Useful for making healthcare decisions (especially end-of-life)
- Pros: widely used; useful aspects of QoL; accessible for free online
- Cons: not as helpful for healthy animals; not scientifically tested.

Quality of Life Scale (HHHHMM Scale)

Using a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = Unacceptable, 10 = Excellent), patients can be evaluated for their quality of life.

Score	Criterion
0-10	Hurt —Is the patient in pain, including distress from difficulty in breathing? Can the pet's pain be successfully managed? Is oxygen necessary?
0-10	Hunger —Is the pet eating enough? Does hand-feeding help? Does the pet require a feeding tube?
0-10	Hydration —Is the pet dehydrated? Are subcutaneous fluids once or twice daily enough to resolve the problem? Are they well tolerated?
0-10	Hygiene —The pet should be kept brushed and clean, particularly after elimination. Does the pet have pressure sores?
0-10	Happiness —Does the pet express joy and interest? Is he responsive to things around him (family, toys, etc)? Is the pet depressed, lonely, anxious, bored, or afraid? Can the pet's bed be near the kitchen and moved near family activities to minimize isolation?
0-10	Mobility —Can the pet get up without assistance? Does the pet need human or mechanical help (eg, a cart)? Does she feel like going for a walk? Is she having seizures or stumbling? <i>Note: Some caregivers feel euthanasia is preferable to amputation, yet an animal with limited mobility may still be alert and responsive, and can have a good quality of life as long as the family is committed to quality care.</i>
0-10	More Good Days than Bad —When bad days outnumber good days, the pet's suffering is appreciable and 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.

Total: A total of > 35 points is acceptable quality of life for pets.

Adapted from Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human–Animal Bond, Villalobos A, Kaplan L—Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, with permission.

CHQLS-15

(Lavan, 2013; Mwacalimba et al., 2020)

- For healthy or ill dogs
- Use in routine care, treatment monitoring and decision making, and research
- Pros: broadly applicable; developed with pet parent input; scientifically studied
- Cons: scoring not transparent; contact Zoetis to use

EXAMPLE: 1 2 3 4 5
 Disagree Neutral Agree

HAPPINESS										
My pet wants to play	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet responds to my presence	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet enjoys life	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet has more good days than bad days	1	2	3	4	5					
PHYSICAL FUNCTIONING										
My pet sleeps more, is less awake	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet is in pain	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet moves normally	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet lays in one place all day long	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet is as active as he/she has been	1	2	3	4	5					
HYGIENE										
My pet keeps him/herself clean	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet smells like urine or has skin irritation	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet's hair is greasy, matted, rough looking	1	2	3	4	5					
MENTAL STATUS										
My pet seems dull or depressed, not alert	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet pants frequently, even at rest	1	2	3	4	5					
My pet shakes or trembles occasionally	1	2	3	4	5					
GENERAL HEALTH										
General health compared to last evaluation (office visit)	1 Worse	2	3 Same	4	5 Better					
General health compared to when dog was first acquired	1 Worse	2	3 Same	4	5 Better					
Current quality of life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	POOR					EXCELLENT				

CHEW (Freeman et al, 2016)

- For healthy or ill cats
- 8 Aspects of QoL:
 - Mobility, Emotion, Energy, Engagement, Eyes, Coat, Appetite, and Fitness
- Use in routine care, treatment monitoring and decision making, and research
- Pros: specific for cats; broadly applicable; developed with pet parent input; scientifically studied
- Cons: length (33 questions)

Cat Health and Wellbeing (CHEW) Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assess the overall health and wellbeing of cats. You will be asked to think about a variety of factors that may have contributed to your cat's health and wellbeing during the past 7 days.

IN EACH SECTION BELOW, PLEASE CAREFULLY READ EACH STATEMENT BELOW AND MARK AN "X" IN THE BOX THAT BEST SHOWS HOW OFTEN, IF AT ALL, YOU NOTICED THE FOLLOWING ABOUT YOUR CAT IN THE PAST 7 DAYS.

Section 1							
THINKING ABOUT JUST THE LAST 7 DAYS.....	Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	DOES NOT APPLY TO ME AND MY CAT
1. My cat got up slowly when he/she was lying down							
2. My cat had difficulty getting up when he/she was lying down							
3. My cat's movements were slow							
4. My cat's movements were stiff							

Section 2							
THINKING ABOUT JUST THE LAST 7 DAYS.....	Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	DOES NOT APPLY TO ME AND MY CAT
5. My cat greeted me when I returned from being away							
6. My cat was curious about his/her surroundings							
7. My cat observed everything going on around him or her							

Participatory QoL Tool

(Yeates et al., 2011)

- Healthy or ill animals
- Use in routine care, particularly for raising awareness, encouraging discussions about QoL
- Pros: focus on engaging pet parents/stakeholders; short
- Cons: developed with limited input from pet parents; less attention to mental aspects of QoL; no total score



Weighted QoL Tool

(Budke et al., 2008)

- For healthy or ill animals
- Use in routine care and for treatment monitoring and decision making
- Pros: individualized for each animal; QoL areas weighted on importance for that animal
- Cons: complicated scoring (but could be simplified); not good for comparing QoL across animals

How it works....

- For each animal:
 - Owners identify 5 areas most influential specific to their pet's QoL
 - Owner ranks the areas by importance
 - Owner rates how well the pet is doing in each area
 - from good to poor, 0-10

McMillian Quick Assessment (McMillian, 2003)

- For healthy or ill animals
- Use in routine care, treatment monitoring and decision making
- Pros: easy to use; focus on feelings
- Cons: some wording may not be easily understood; no total score

Appendix 1

Quick Assessment Quality of Life Questionnaire

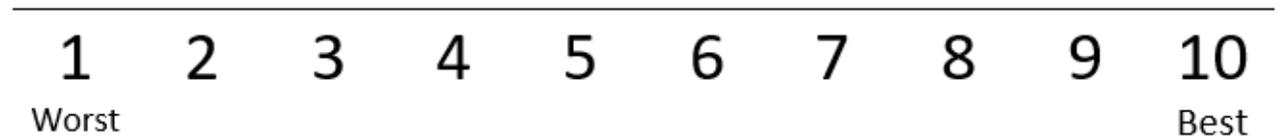
1. How many pleasures does your pet currently have in his life? _____ How many pleasures did your pet have in his life when he was feeling his best, physically and emotionally? _____
2. How many things does your pet currently have or do in his life that could be called fun? _____ How many things did your pet have or do in his life that could be called fun when he was feeling his best, physically and emotionally? _____
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being unaffected and 10 being severely distressed (suffering), how much discomfort is your pet currently experiencing from unpleasant feelings (such as nausea, ill feelings, difficulty breathing, pain, itchiness, constipation, loneliness, fear, anxiety, depression)? _____
4. All things considered, what do you consider to be your pet's current enjoyment of life overall, on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 means no enjoyment, and 10 is the highest possible level of enjoyment)? _____
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being very unwilling and 10 being very willing, how willing would you be to take on the life your pet is now living? _____
6. Based on the answers given to the above five questions, rate your pet's current quality of life using a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest possible quality of life an animal could have. _____

Single-item Tool

- For healthy or ill animals
- Use in routine care, or treatment monitoring and decision making
- Pros: quick; easy to use; meaning of QoL up to individual (could be con too)
- Cons: no information on different aspects of QoL; possibly not as good at showing subtle changes in QoL overtime

Example:

How would you rate your pet's quality of life—his/her overall health, comfort, and happiness—on a scale from 1 (worst it has ever been) to 10 (best it has ever been)?



Interpreting and Making Decisions

- A tool can give you a score
 - Can be useful for comparing groups of animals at a given time; or tracking QoL overtime for individual animal
 - No universal cutoff for acceptable vs unacceptable levels of QoL
 - Best viewed as continuum rather than absolute
- The answers to the questions can be used to start a conversation
- No one score or answer on a tool should ever be used alone to drive decision making.

How to pick the right tool for you?

- Population
- Purpose
- Consider scientific quality
 - Especially if comparing groups of animals
 - Does the tool measure what you want, consistently?
- Weigh pros and cons

Wrap up



Summary

- There is no widely accepted definition of QoL
 - A common term would be helpful for the field
- QoL assessment is important and useful
 - Engage stakeholders, screen for problems, monitor changes overtime, make decisions, and evaluate interventions and programs
- Choose a measure that is right for your purpose, setting and client and patient population
- There is no widely accepted tool or score for acceptable QoL
 - Use measurement in conjunction with other indicators for decision making
 - More research is needed to produce new tools

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