



Introduction

Your Southside Animal Clinic team is here to support you and your family during the palliative care process of your beloved pet.

In this “Palliative Care Kit” you will find many resources that will help you understand how to best help your pet during palliative care, giving you the best tools to help with their overall quality of life. It will aide you during the time spent with your pet as you assess them at home during their care.

Your palliative care kit includes:

- **Pet Care Kit-** All your resources will be kept in this kit for easy access. It is an organised way to keep track of your pet’s wellbeing as well as the resources/information. It is also a nice storage area for any additional items/information for your pet.
- **Introduction Guide-** This page going over what to expect in your kit and the support of your Southside Animal Clinic team.
- **FAQ Sheet-** Frequently asked questions on palliative care and the quality of life in regards to your pet.
- **Quality of Life Calendar and Quality of Life Daily Diary/Sheet-** Used to keep track of your pets “good days” and “bad days” and to help you assess and understand your pet’s day to day quality of life.
- **Pre-Planning and Pet Aftercare Support Guide-** A booklet that covers how to prepare and plan for the aftercare of your pet.
- **Gateway Pamphlet and Stoney Ridge Cemetery Card-** Information on Gateway the service we use at Southside Animal Clinic to care for your pets after care (burial, visitation, and cremation services provided).
- **Understanding Grief Pamphlet-** A guide to understanding the process of grief as well as the 24/7 free hotline available to speak with a counselor.

Please feel free to contact us by phone at **519-649-1900** or by email at **ssac@southsideanimalclinic.org** anytime you need assistance, advice, or just to talk things through. The team at Southside Animal Clinic is here for you.



Frequently Asked Questions about Palliative Care and Quality of Life

Q: What does Palliative Care mean?

A: Palliative medicine is, by definition, care that is delivered as a pet approaches their end of life. The most common circumstances that lead up to the decision to initiate palliative care include:

- Natural complications with aging.
- The diagnosis or progression of a life-limiting illness.
- The decision not to pursue curative therapy.
- The progression of disease symptoms, so that they interfere with the activities of daily living.

Q: What does Quality of Life mean?

A: The standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by your pet. This is measured by how their mobility, nutrition, hydration, interactions/attitude, elimination, and the enjoyment of their favourite things are affected by their health.

Q: What are some conditions or concerns that may affect my pet's quality of life during palliative care?

A: Most pets that are going through palliative care have one or more issues or concerns that will affect how they are day to day. Some (but not all) examples are:

- **Blindness.** Generally, occurs gradually from changes in the lens of the eye.
- **Cancer.** The risk of cancers of all types increases with age.
- **Chronic renal disease.** This degenerative kidney disease leads to the decreased ability of the kidneys to filter waste from the blood.
- **Deafness.** Generally, occurs gradually over time as the eardrum becomes less flexible.
- **Osteoarthritis.** Painful inflammation and deterioration of the joints.
- **Overweight/obesity.** More than half of dogs and cats are overweight or obese, reducing their quality of life.

Q: What can I do to make my pet more comfortable during palliative care at home?

A: Modifying your home and having access to supplements and medications will be key factors in ensuring your pet is comfortable. These options may include:

- **Pain management** is the most important facet of palliative care in pets. Pain is best managed from a multimodal perspective, which means using various techniques, both pharmacologic (medications and/or supplements) as well as nonpharmacologic (rehab, laser therapy, etc.).
- **Aiding in mobility** is extremely helpful to the average pet that could be uncomfortable. Adding non-skid floor surfaces (rugs or spongy interlocking floor tiles). Using ramps for areas they like to lay on such as the bed or couch, or getting in/out of the vehicle. The use of a sling may be helpful in aiding them to move around in more difficult places (going outside or up/down stairs)
- **Assistance with feeding** may become necessary or helpful depending on the condition of your pet. Raising food and water dishes is one of the best ways to help with neck/back pain and gastric upset/influx.
- **Creating a safe environment** for them to move around and feel comfortable in by blocking stairs/supervising the pet when they go up and down stairs. Not leaving them alone outside especially in rougher terrain/unpleasant weather. Creating a space to "hang out" for your pet that is comfortable and close to where family members spend their time is important as well so pets can remain actively engaged with the family they love.