

PAWSPICE PROGRAM

Welcome to our veterinary pawspice (pet hospice) program information center. This program was developed to offer pet owners a chance for a longer farewell to their beloved pet. It strives to nurture the human-animal bond. It encourages the pet owner to enjoy private moments with their terminally ill pet and teaches them to treasure the good parts of each day. Palliative treatments for the terminally ill pet are administered, often by the pet owner and often at home. The best way to describe palliative is to look at it as trying to find treatments that will make their sick “pal” feel better. The therapy is aimed at comfort for the pet, but, where this differs from most human hospice services, is that no doors are closed. The pet owner is still able, either through our hospital or through specialty services, to continue to seek diagnostics and possible treatments and or cures for their pet’s condition. A Quality of Life Scale is used to help us monitor the pet’s progress in the Pawspice program. It is a guide. It will also help the pet owner to see when the end of their pet’s life is drawing nearer and better help them with decisions when this day approaches.

When a pet begins our Pawspice Program, we evaluate the pet’s current status. There are seven categories that we look at and we score each category on a scale of 0-10. A perfect score would be 70. We generally hope to see the pet scoring 5 or better in each category to feel that we are adequately maintaining their Quality of Life. The seven categories can be remembered as the HHHHMM scale.

H=HURT: Is pain control adequate? Is breathing comfortable?

H=HUNGER: Is your pet eating enough? Is hand feeding or are other special enticements necessary?

H=HYDRATION: Are your pet’s hydration needs being adequately fulfilled either by itself or by administration of appropriate fluid therapy?

H=HYGIENE: Are you pet’s hygiene needs being served? Are elimination areas and wounds/tumors being kept clean so as to prevent urine scald and skin conditions in areas of discharge?

H=HAPPINESS: Does the pet express joy and interest? Is he responsive to happenings around him? Can your pet be kept close to family activities so as not to feel isolated?

M=MOBILITY: Can your pet rise on its own? Does he feel like going for a walk? Is he given the opportunity to get daily exercise?

M=MORE GOOD DAYS THAN BAD: When there are too many bad days in a row, quality of life is not able to be adequately maintained.

Upon entering the Pawspice Program, the pet owner is asked to maintain a daily evaluation. Sometimes, it is adequate to monitor your pet's progress once weekly. This log is evaluated at regular visits. This will help Dr. Zehner to tailor your pet's care to help to improve its Quality of Life. These evaluations are also so valuable in helping the pet owner know when the time to make decisions regarding that which we all fear and worry about is nearing, the final care.

Throughout the Pawspice Program, we are frequently asked, "How will I know when the time that I have to say good-bye is here?" We will direct you look at your pet for the answer to this question. It is our profound belief that when that time arrives, either by a look in their eye or by some action, your pet will let you know that the time is here. We want to accommodate that moment as best as we can so that it is not any more stressful than we realize that it already will be. We like to discuss "the plan" during the time that your pet is in our Pawspice Program. The plan will include multiple choices so that you will know what the plan is if your first choice is not possible. Plan A may be that you want your pet to go to sleep peacefully at home. Plan B may be that you would like your pet to receive its final care (euthanasia) at home. Country View Animal Clinic will try to accommodate this for you. Plan C may be that you will bring the pet to our clinic during regular office hours and have the euthanasia performed in our clinic and Plan D may be that you need to visit the emergency clinic should the need arise as an emergency and the other options aren't possible. There are definitely specifics of each plan that need to be discussed ahead of time. If you do find yourself having to resort to Plan D or seeking services outside of your Pawspice environment, you need to be strong for your pet so as to alleviate any fears that it may be having. You need to go to the clinic or emergency facility, have the procedure performed, stay strong for your pet while it is still alive and then get to a safe place and begin the grieving process.

Please contact our clinic, Country View Animal Clinic, with any questions that you may have about this program. We will be happy to discuss this with you.