



Assessing Quality of Life for your Horse



When you have loved and cared for your horse and provided a good quality of life it is equally important that they have a good end of life. Deciding to euthanize your horse is one of the most difficult decisions an owner will have to make. The quality of the horse's life is defined by their overall physical and mental well-being. The increased availability and effectiveness of veterinary procedures and medicine has resulted in increased life span of the horse; strengthening the bond between horse and owner. Longer life makes it increasingly likely that the owner will need to consider the quality of that prolonged life of their equine companion.

Questions to Consider:

- Does your horse have pain that cannot be managed?
- Does your horse have difficulties drinking or eating? Are medications not seeming to help?
- Does your horse have difficulty getting up and moving around?
- Is your horse suffering? Will a change in environment (onset of winter) cause suffering?
- Does your horse have an incurable condition? How long will your horse be debilitated or in pain?
- Does your horse have a condition that is prone to a sudden, catastrophic event (rupture of an organ, internal bleeding, seizure, broken bone)? The only way to guarantee your horse will pass peacefully and without stress is to euthanize before the catastrophic event occurs.





Quality of Life Chart

The following chart will help you visualize and monitor all aspects of your horse's life and help indicate good or poor quality of life. The chart should be used when observing your horse on a daily basis, to monitor their condition. This will help indicate areas of concern. It is important when using this indicator to understand that if you identify any of the conditions in the list that you must seek veterinary advice as a slight change in behaviour can indicate that veterinary attention is needed; potentially resulting in improved quality of life for your horse.



*The following Quality of Life Chart is used with permission from The British Horse Society

Quality of Life Chart			
	My Horse...	Yes	No
1.	Does not interact with me in the same way as before (e.g. does not come to greet you in the morning)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Does not interact with other horses in the same way as before (e.g. keeps their distance from the rest of the herd)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Is withdrawn, dull or depressed (e.g. stand in the corner of the stable with head down)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Behaviour has changed significantly (e.g. has become aggressive)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Does not seem to enjoy life (e.g. a change in character such as showing signs of stress)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Is not eating its normal amount of hay or forage (e.g. a significant amount of hay is being left)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Is not as active as normal (e.g. stiff movement, reluctant to walk or reduce performance)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Is losing weight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Is having diarrhea often (e.g. for three or more days)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Is not drinking enough water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Is experiencing discomfort or is not able to urinate (e.g. attempts to urinate but nothing happens)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Needs help to move or get up (e.g. struggles to rise from laying down)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Is experiencing pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Is not weight bearing on one or more limbs (cannot comfortably stand on all four limbs or is resting a front leg)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Is sweating without exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Is blowing (panting) without exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Is trembling or shaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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