Quality of Life for Your Senior Dog

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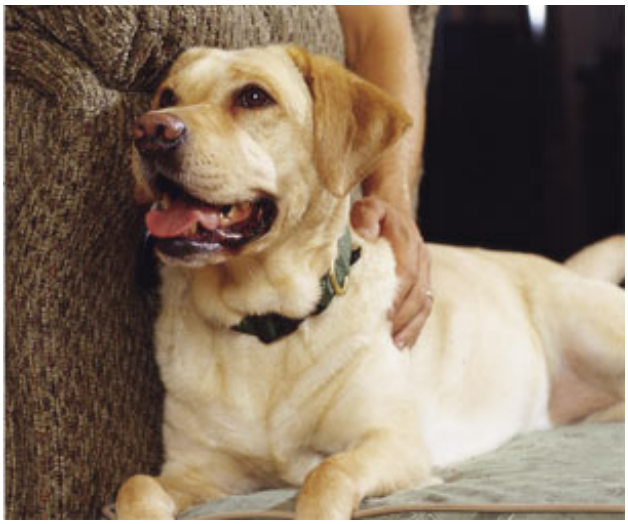

QUALITY OF life

facing the difficult decisions

As pets age, pet owners ultimately have to deal with the ailments, aging, or terminal illness in the lives of their dogs. The challenge is to meet the pet's basic needs of nutrition and fluid intake, while keeping him pain-free, comfortable, clean, and content. The following guidelines are useful in evaluating your dog's overall condition when his health is in a compromised state.

ASSESS CAREFULLY:

- the amount of suffering and pain
- the ability and desire to take nourishment and hydration
- the capability to keep clean
- the capacity to interact enthusiastically with family members
- the strength and flexibility to be somewhat mobile
- the ratio of "good days" to "bad days," as characterized by weakness, vomiting, depression, etc.

Work closely with your veterinarian to determine when a reasonable quality of life can no longer be maintained, despite your best efforts of intervention. At that time, feelings of denial and guilt must be put aside in order to honor the dignity of the animal. If death comes quickly and naturally, without suffering, accept it as a blessing. Whatever the situation, your veterinarian can support you in assessing, facing, and managing the gamut of end-of-life decisions and provide professional support when the time comes to "let go."

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