

The Good Life Plan

*A living plan for the life they love, and the goodbye
you would want them to have one day.*

This plan belongs to _____

Started on _____

Last reviewed _____ Next review _____

Welcome

At Vets at Home, we have helped thousands of pet parents through one of the hardest parts of loving an animal: knowing when and how to say goodbye.

One thing we see again and again is how difficult it can be to think or talk about the end of a pet's life. It can feel too sad, too soon, or simply like something we would rather think about another day.

But when we do not think about these things until our pet is already very unwell, important decisions can end up being made in a rush, at a time when emotions are high and it is hard to think clearly.

This is your plan

There is no right way to complete it. Start wherever feels right. Complete it in any order. Fill in as much or as little as you want. Skip anything you do not want to think about yet. You do not even need to finish it.

Come back to it over the years. Your pet will change and your thoughts may change too. That is exactly why this is a living plan, rather than something you complete once and forget.

In our survey, completed by almost 2,500 pet parents, almost three in four who had been through a loss told us they would value being able to record their wishes in advance, so that if the time ever came, they would already have thought about what mattered to them.

That is why we created The Good Life Plan.

It is not about deciding when it is time to say goodbye. And it certainly is not only for elderly or poorly pets.

It is a place to think about what makes your pet's life a good life, what matters to you if their health ever changes, the things you would still love to do together and, one day, what you would want their goodbye to look and feel like.

Share it with your vet, your family or anybody else involved in your pet's care. You do not have to use Vets at Home when the time comes. We just know that making a plan makes a difference and we wanted to do something that would help.

And if you ever do need us, you can choose to share your plan with us, so you do not have to begin thinking about everything from scratch at a difficult time.

If you need help today. If your pet is unwell now and you would rather talk it through with someone, we are here. Call 0333 009 0883. Our free Quality of Life Assessment at vetsathome.com/quality-of-life can also help you put words to what you are seeing.

1

About them

Your pet's name _____

What kind of pet are they?

☐ Dog

☐ Rabbit

☐ Cat

☐ Something else

2

What makes their life a good life?

Every pet is different. Thinking about what makes your pet happiest while they are well can help you recognise the things that really matter to them throughout their life.

When your pet is having a really good day, what does that look like?

What are three things that make your pet's life especially good?

They do not need to be big things. Think about the ordinary things that make them happy: food, a walk, sitting in the garden, chasing a ball, sleeping beside you, seeing a favourite person, exploring, cuddles, sunshine, or something completely unique to them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

If your pet ever became seriously unwell

Pets can become ill or injured at any age, and none of us can know in advance exactly what decisions we might face. You do not need to make medical decisions now. This section is simply a chance to think about what matters to you, while you have the time and space to do so.

If your pet became seriously unwell or injured, what would matter most to you when thinking about treatment?

You might think about their chance of getting back to a life they enjoy, pain or discomfort, how frightening treatment might be, time away from home, how difficult recovery could be, or something else entirely.

I would feel comfortable asking my pet to go through difficult treatment if...

I would begin to feel that treatment was asking too much of my pet if...

Are there things you already feel you would not want your pet to go through?

It is completely okay not to know.

A note to your future self

These are not medical instructions or decisions you are making today. They are simply a record of what matters to you and how you feel right now. If difficult decisions ever do arise, it can help to look back at what you thought when you had the time and space to think clearly. It is very common to question difficult decisions again and again. Having your own earlier thoughts written down may help you remember what mattered to you before you were trying to make decisions in the middle of a crisis. And, of course, your thoughts are completely yours to change.

Knowing when things are changing

Look back at the three things you wrote in section 2 that make your pet's life especially good.

If your pet stopped being able to enjoy some of these things, would that be a sign to you that it was time to talk to your vet about their quality of life?

- ☐ Yes, I think it would
 ☐ I am not sure
☐ Possibly, it would depend on what else was happening
 ☐ I would rather not answer this yet

Are there any particular changes in your pet that you think would make you worry that they were not enjoying life any more?

You know your pet better than anybody. It might be losing interest in food, no longer wanting affection, struggling to do something they love, seeming uncomfortable or unsettled, or something completely unique to them.

A little help judging quality of life

Sometimes gradual changes are difficult to see when you are with your pet every day. Our free Quality of Life Assessment asks seven simple questions covering pain, eating, hydration, hygiene, happiness, mobility and whether there are more good days than bad. Take it at vetsathome.com/quality-of-life.

Keep a record of your pet's assessments

Over time, having the results together may help you spot changes and have clearer conversations with your vet.

Date	Score out of 14	Result

What the scores mean: 10 to 14, your pet is coping. 6 to 9, worth a conversation. 0 to 5, talk to a vet today. The assessment is not a diagnosis or a replacement for veterinary advice. It is there to help you put words and a number around what you are seeing.

Our life together

Planning ahead should not only be about the ending. There may be places you would still love to visit together, little treats you have always promised them, photographs you have been meaning to take, or simply everyday moments you would like to make more time for.

Things we would still love to do together

Something I would love us to do	Done?
	Yes / Not yet
	Yes / Not yet
	Yes / Not yet
	Yes / Not yet
	Yes / Not yet
	Yes / Not yet

Is there something you have always meant to do with your pet but never quite got around to?

Things about my pet I never want to forget

Their funny habits, noises, expressions and the everyday things that make them who they are.

If one day it is time to say goodbye

You are not deciding when that day should be. You are simply thinking about how you might want things to be if, one day, your pet reached the end of their life. Unlike many difficult moments in life, euthanasia can often be planned. Thinking about your wishes beforehand gives you the best chance of creating the gentle, peaceful goodbye you would want for them. And remember, everything you write here can be changed.

Where would you ideally like your pet to be?

☐

At home

☐

Somewhere else: _____

☐

At our usual veterinary practice

☐

I am not sure yet

If at home, is there a particular place where you would like your pet to be?

Their bed? The sofa? The garden? Your lap? Somewhere they particularly love?

Who would you ideally like to be there when you say goodbye?

What would help your pet feel safest and most comfortable?

Their favourite bed or blanket? A toy? A particular person? Being outside? Familiar smells?

If your pet could eat absolutely anything, what would their final meal or treats be?

6, continued

If one day it is time to say goodbye

Before the day comes, is there anyone you would especially like your pet to spend some time with?

Perhaps a family member, a friend or another animal who is important to them.

If circumstances allowed, what would your pet's perfect last day look like?

Is there anything you would particularly like around you when you say goodbye?

Music, silence, photographs, candles, being outside, or nothing at all.

What would you like to happen afterwards?

If you choose euthanasia at home, you can decide what happens after your pet has passed. Some families know they will want some time with their pet afterwards. That might be a few quiet minutes, a couple of hours or, occasionally, longer. Other families feel very differently. They have said their goodbye while their pet is still with them, and would find spending time with them afterwards too difficult. They prefer their pet to be collected as soon after the appointment as possible.

All are completely okay. One of the benefits of thinking about this now is that you do not have to consider the question for the very first time in the moment.

What feels closest to what you think you would want?

- ☐ I would probably want my pet collected straight afterwards
- ☐ I would like a little time with my pet first
- ☐ I would like to spend a longer period of time with my pet
- ☐ I am really not sure how I will feel
- ☐ Something else: _____

You can always change your mind on the day.

Aftercare

What would you currently prefer to happen to your pet afterwards?

- ☐ Individual cremation, with their ashes returned to me
- ☐ Individual cremation, I would not need their ashes returned
- ☐ Communal cremation, ashes are not returned
- ☐ Burial on land I own
- ☐ Burial in a pet cemetery
- ☐ I am not sure yet
- ☐ Something else: _____

Memories and keepsakes

There are now many beautiful ways to remember a much-loved pet, but you absolutely do not need to buy anything. Some of the most precious keepsakes cost very little, and because you are thinking ahead, some can be made while your pet is still fit and well rather than being left until their final days.

You might make your own clay paw print, take a nose print, keep a lock of fur, create a photo album, or simply make sure you have some lovely photographs of you together. Some families choose professional keepsakes or memorials. Others do not want anything at all. There is no right answer, and remembering your pet does not need to cost money.

Are there any memories or keepsakes you think you might like?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Paw print, ink or clay | ☐ Ashes casket or urn |
| ☐ Nose print | ☐ Memorial jewellery |
| ☐ Fur clipping | ☐ Memorial stone, tree or garden |
| ☐ Keep their collar or tag | ☐ Something handmade |
| ☐ Lovely photographs together | ☐ I do not think I would want a keepsake |
| ☐ Senior pet photography session | ☐ I am not sure |
| ☐ Photo album or photo book | ☐ Something else: _____ |
| ☐ Portrait | |

Anything else you would like to remember, or to say

Just in case you need help urgently

Even when a pet's health deteriorates quite quickly, it is often possible to arrange a same-day appointment with a veterinary practice or a home euthanasia provider. Nobody can guarantee availability, but needing help sooner than expected does not automatically mean that the plans you have made here have to change.

Overnight can be more challenging. There are usually fewer options for home visits during the night. Although you may be able to find a vet who can come to your home, there may be occasions where the quickest or most appropriate option is to take your pet to an emergency out-of-hours veterinary hospital. If your pet suddenly becomes distressed in the middle of the night, the last thing you want to be doing is searching the internet for telephone numbers, addresses or directions. So it is worth having these details ready.

My usual veterinary practice

Name _____

Telephone _____

Postcode for sat nav _____

My nearest emergency out-of-hours veterinary hospital

Name _____

Telephone _____

Postcode for sat nav _____

My preferred home euthanasia provider

Name _____

Telephone _____

Vets at Home visits families across the UK: 0333 009 0883, vetsathome.com.

If your pet ever appears to be suffering or in significant distress, do not wait for your preferred arrangements if appropriate help is not available. Contact a vet for urgent advice.

The Good Life Plan is not designed to be a veterinary medical record or a booking form. If you later choose to share your plan with Vets at Home, request a call or book a home visit, we will ask you for a few practical details at that point, and only the ones we need. You can also make this plan online, save it and update it over the years, at vetsathome.com/good-life-plan.