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October 2017 Newsletter

When It's Time

We all dread the day when we know we will have to say goodbye to our beloved animals. It's unfortunately a fact of life, and it also comes with the territory of having animals. As an animal lover, it's hard to know when to let go of our lifelong friends. Hopefully this article will shed a little light on when it's time to say goodbye.

As humans, we tend to anthropomorphize our animals. This means we give our animals human thoughts, emotions, and characteristics. We tend to say "Well that's what he thinks about it!" when our animals make a funny face in response to an event. The trouble with this comes when we start giving these human thoughts and emotions to our animals at inappropriate times. Animals do not fear death like humans do. All an animal knows is what it is feeling at that moment in time. If an animal is in debilitating pain, like our chronic laminitis cases, it has no idea why that pain is occurring and is unable to rationalize what is happening. So, keeping an animal alive when it is clearly suffering from an immense amount of pain is really doing a disservice to that animal. All it knows is that it is in pain and has no idea why.

Another common problem we see as veterinarians is the old, skinny horse. Many people keep these animals around because they have sentimental value, and they think because the horse is still eating and moving, it's ok to keep them alive. However, what usually happens is eventually that horse loses enough muscle and has such a low supply of energy, that he lays down to sleep and then can't get up. Or he falls and can't get up. It's then that the veterinarian is called (usually in the middle of the night) to euthanize the horse in a situation that is less than ideal. If you have an old, skinny horse, and no amount of dental work, veterinary intervention, deworming, and feeding are going to get that animal to gain weight, sometimes it's better to euthanize them in a controlled situation. Waiting until the horse lays down and can't get up is extremely stressful and frightening to a horse that has no idea why its legs won't work.

The bottom line is that horses are not humans. We tend to get a little selfish when it comes to keeping our animals around longer than we should, not because of the animal, but because we don't want to let go. Waiting until the horse's quality of life has been so severely affected that it can no longer carry out the necessary tasks like eating, drinking, pooping, and peeing, is when you've waited too long. It's much better to say goodbye when you can control the situation. Choose a beautiful day in a nice, shady, grassy area where the horse has enjoyed many a summer afternoon, rather than waiting until a cold, rainy night when the horse is unable to stand.

Castration Signs : October 23rd to 31st