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[Home](#) > Bob's Battle with Lymphoma: And Everything Else

Bob's Battle with Lymphoma: And Everything Else

Mon, 2011-08-15 14:51 — Robin Olson

I'm still struggling with putting words together when it has to do with Bob. Writing about it makes me think about him, his care, about his challenges, which ultimately lead me to worrying (even more) about how much time is left. I'm trying not to worry, not to fret, but I am an anxious person by nature, so how easy is this to accomplish? It's a struggle to stay with it-stay with the fear of seeing your cat growing more frail while you try to be present in each moment.

It's Monday. Bob should have been dead for three days already, but I cancelled the appointment to have him put down. Each day that ticks by, is a bonus day for him (and me). Each day I worry that I will wait too long or that Bob will go into distress when I can't get Dr Larry here, but it's a chance I have to take. Some amazing things have happened for Bob. I have to ride this out, regardless of how difficult.



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Just Bob.

I mentioned in my last post that I gave Bob insulin and I want to talk about how I arrived at that decision.

I've come to the point where I don't just blindly follow what my Vet tells me. I have to really consider what is said, but then do my own research. **Vets are like anyone else, they can't know everything and I doubt they know my cat better than I do.** Think about it. Your Vet has to treat how many animals over a given day? How many upset pet-parents call him or her? There is a tremendous amount of information they have to keep track of, but they can't give your cat or dog 100% of their attention. It's just too much to take on. **They also don't LIVE with your pet. They don't see the fine details that you may have forgotten to mention. When your cat is terminally ill, as Bob is, I think it's okay to take a step back and really consider what is before you and not make a decision solely based on what someone tells you to do.**



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Bob still LOVES his cat grass.

So even though the tests say things look terrible for Bob, Bob, himself is still plugging along. **He has recently become diabetic from the steroids I had to give him to control his cancer and if that was not treated, Bob would suffer**

terribly from bladder infections, muscle wasting and organ failure. Something had to be done about his blood sugar. Because of this problem and because chemo is no longer an option, I decided to ask Jennifer, our Board Member of Kitten Associates and my good friend, to help me with Bob. Jennifer is a Case Manager for Diabetic Cats in Need and she really knows her way around diabetic cats.



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Yes. Bob is eating DRY FOOD! It's grain-free and very high quality. Bob gets what he wants these days and this is one of the few things he eats on his own.

We did a Blood Glucose Curve over the course of an afternoon. Every hour Jennifer took a tiny speck of blood from Bob's ear and tested it on a meter. The first reading was almost 500 when under 100 is normal. The next few readings dipped down into the 400's, but on his own, Bob couldn't get his sugar to come down enough. We gave him 1 unit of Lantus, which is slow acting and gentle. We re-checked Bob's blood and the number came down a bit, then into the mid-300's an hour later. This meant that Bob was getting some help from the insulin and if he continued to go down, he might feel a lot better.

The next day I started to see a change. Bob was a bit brighter. He was more willing to eat. Not a lot, but he ate. I still syringe feed him at least twice a day to supplement what he can eat on his own.

When you're assessing your cat for "Quality of Life," you take everything into consideration. This is my informal checklist:

Using the litter pan? YES! Bob even had a big ol' normal looking poop which I haven't seen him do in months.

Preening? Or grooming? Yes, Bob still washes his face and we give him a bath to help sooth his awful ringworm.

Eating!! The big one: Bob IS eating some. He is pickier than ever, but at this point, he gets what he wants as long as it's not grained food. I ain't gonna feed that. NO WAY. Bob's offered food MANY times a day. The cancer gets most of his nutrients so sadly Bob is very very thin. Bob's also drinking a lot of water because of the diabetes, but I've seen him not drinking as much over the past few days.

Interacting with family? YES! Bob gave me the "Puss in Boots" look that tells me he's hungry. He slept on the sofa next to Nicky. He's not hiding. He doesn't move around a lot, but he DOES get up on his own and he still purrs, just not as often.

Is the cat comfortable? Or does he/she sit "meatloafed" with paws tucked under the belly, NOT looking relaxed at all? Bob has been looking more relaxed lately. I've seen him flatten out and even have dreams while he sleeps. **Does the cat cry in pain?**



©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. A shadow of his former 16 pounds, it's still BOB at just over 9.

People have come up with all sorts of formulas about how many good days the cat has versus how many bad and how to know it's time. I think it's a start, but really, as most of us know, we'll know when it's time. Be observant. **Try to watch out for the urge to just get it over with because YOU are suffering watching this natural process occur. This is very very**

difficult, but we owe it to our animals to give them every option and every day we can.

As for Bob. He's still Bob. He is the coolest cat I've ever known. Though it hurts my heart to pet him, because he's so thin, his soul is unchanged. He's cool even in his last days.

I love Bob.

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[Bob Dole](#) ^[1]

[Cute Photo](#) ^[2]

[Disease](#) ^[3]

[Medications](#) ^[4]

[Vets](#) ^[5]

[Who Knew?](#) ^[6]

[Diet](#) ^[7]

[You Rock!](#) ^[8]

[Jennifer](#) ^[9]

Comments

Mon, 2011-08-15 17:24 — [jansfunnyfarm \(not verified\)](#) ^[10]

Bob ^[11]

It's so hard watching them like this but you're right about not rushing things and it being a natural process. We hope Bob has more good day to share with you.

Mon, 2011-08-15 20:13 — Pam (not verified)

You Are AWESOME ^[12]

Hi Robin- I think you are amazing with what you are doing for Bob. As you can read from your assessment, he still DOES have a quality of life. You and he are so close, I believe he will tell you when he is ready! By the way, have you ever tried Grapefruit Seed Extract for the ringworm. The blogger over at Feral Cat Behavior uses it on kittens around their eyes so it must be gentle. She dilutes 8 drops to a shot glass full of water and applies with q-tips.

Many blessings and hugs to you and Bob. Those little Ginger Snaps are just the best aren't they!!!

Mon, 2011-08-15 21:52 — BETH STRATTON (not verified)

bob ^[13]

God bless you & Bob...my heart goes out to you both...I remember weighing those decisions the two times I've had to do so, hardest thing ever--hugs!... >^..^

Tue, 2011-08-16 03:49 — Wayne (not verified)

I have had two experiences ^[14]

I have had two experiences with sick cats, and I totally agree with this - a cat knows when it is time.

When I was fifteen, the cat that I had grown up with (Misty), then almost 18 himself, began to suffer renal failure. He slowed down, but refused to give up. I remember coming home from school and see him begin to run towards me, then he would realise that he was in some pain and slow down to a walk. I still sat on the knees of any available seated person and purred like a diesel engine. He always chose his seating positions very carefully, and seemed very adept at managing his own condition, his eyes always looked happy even at the very end. When his time finally came, as with many cats, Misty walked into the night and never came back. I'm nearly 40 now and I still find myself looking out for him - he had been a constant companion throughout my childhood and his little face is etched into my memory.

More recently, I was owned by Charlie, a "Sylvester"-type character who was diagnosed diabetic at the age of about 10. His health deteriorated very quickly and he spent several days receiving 24-hour care at the vet's surgery. I visited daily at this time, and the vets told me how he always perked up at this times. He could have been sad and sleepy all day, but I always say improvement. Charlie was the perfect patient, and never had any problems taking his injections. Unfortunately, late last year my work and family situations caused me to take the most difficult decision, it became clear to me that I wasn't able to give Charlie all of the time, care and attention that he needed, so I had to find him a home with a charity that I knew well. The old boy soldiers on in his own way, he is everybody's friend and probably considers himself human judging by his general attitude!

Its is clear from everything I've seen in Bob's blog that he has enjoyed a good life and is still enjoying it despite the severity of his condition, my thoughts are with him as he battles against adversity!

Tue, 2011-08-16 05:21 — [Lizzie \(not verified\)](#) ^[15]

Bob ^[16]

I admire what you are doing for Bob. I've been thinking of you, Sam and Bob - I know it is difficult for you all. It is sad to see these photos of your dear cat grown thin and ill; but if he is still living his life (rather than suffering and not coping), then I am sure you are doing what is right for Bob. I've got to know enough about you to be sure you will continue to do what you know is right for him too.

We have an elderly cat, who has kidney and blood pressure problems. He also has arthritis and we've noticed recently, that he is not walking so comfortably and seems stiff. We give him glucosamine tablets and cod liver oil, which we're adjusting to help him. My son suggested we "take him for walks" to give him a little gentle exercise - he likes to follow us if we will wait patiently for him to explore and catch up. I hope that, when he gets to the point where he's struggling, we are able to face the inevitable with courage and intelligence, just like you.

Love and prayers to Bob Dole, also to Robin and Sam.

Tue, 2011-08-16 18:48 — Kay (not verified)

Bob ^[17]

Ahhh, you posts and photos of Bob make me cry, my heart aches for you both. Like you, I just don't want him to suffer. You have done an amazing job with him, and I know that he feels very loved. You are both in my prayers.

Thank you for all you do for our cat friends.

Tue, 2011-08-16 19:14 — Cindy (not verified)

Bless little Bob, and you. ^[18]

Bless little Bob, and you. You are doing the right thing in that you are watchful for signs of distress. You'll do what you need to when it's time.

Tue, 2011-08-16 20:08 — [Marilia \(not verified\)](#) ^[19]

≡) ^[20]

Sweetie Bob! Thanks to give a new life for him!

Thu, 2011-08-18 16:44 — Gwen Dell (not verified)

What about resisting the urge to prolong things? ^[21]

(This is just a general comment in response to something you wrote, not a specific comment directed to you about your situation with Bob.)

You say "Try to watch out for the urge to just get it over with because YOU are suffering watching this natural process occur. This is very very difficult, but we owe it to our animals to give them every option and every day we can." but the opposite is true as well. People often prolong things unnecessarily just because they feel like they should fight to the bitter end, when really the animal (or the person, for that matter -- we do the same thing with people) would have preferred to just move on. People don't always know "when it's time" when it actually *is* time, even if the animal does. Sometimes "it's time" is just the point where the people run out of things to try, or the point where they finally hear what the animal has been trying to tell them for days/weeks/months.

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Links

- [1] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/38>
- [2] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/48>
- [3] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/51>
- [4] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/65>
- [5] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/85>
- [6] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/110>
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