

## **“Arthritic German Shepherd”**

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Jerry, a German Shepherd, has severe arthritis. For the past year he has been incapable of doing anything but lying on the floor all day. When he does stand or walk, he is wobbly and clearly in pain. He is still friendly, however: he wags his tail when his owners come home, shows affection, and is upbeat despite his condition. He also shows other signs of positive well-being: he rarely yelps, always eats, and so far has been able to keep his weight down and avoid other major health problems.

Should Jerry be euthanized?

**Information for Instructors Using  
“Arthritic German Shepherd”**

**Ethical issues raised by this case include:**

- What kind of suffering in a companion animal is acceptable?
- How much suffering in a companion animal is acceptable?
- How is quality of life best assessed?

**The teaching objectives for the case include the following:**

- Practice in applying accepted ethical principles to particular circumstances.
- Practice in articulating alternative courses of action.

**What are the salient facts or features specific to the case that creates the problem and how might the problem be solved?**

- The German Shepherd, Jerry, has arthritis, which limits his mobility and causes substantial pain. Otherwise, Jerry shows signs of positive well-being.
- Students may explore alternative courses of action, such as treatment options for animal arthritis.