

Why you should not put down your aging pooch

By Andrea Campanile

My husband John, a veterinarian and I have had our dog Dukie for 18 years. He is a small black poodle and has been the family as we raise our children who are now adults and out of the house. He is a sweet dog but due to his age, he is blind, deaf, and senile. The senility manifests itself in confusion, walking into corners and getting stuck or just staring at the wall.

We carry him outside to do his business but most times, he stands there, sniffing and unaware of what he's supposed to do. Consequently, he comes back and into the house and pees and poops wherever and whenever.

Did I also mention that I cook for him? He won't eat any dog food and at this age we feel he's earned the right to cooked rice and chopped meat.

We pay a dog walker to come to our home everyday while we work and "let him out". When I return home, I find him in his crate, wee-wee pad wet and dirty. Which necessitates bathing him at least 3 times a week.

This summer, we had a 10 day trip planned and I thought it "might be the time put Dukie down."

"No way will we do that!" Chimed my husband.

He's not in pain, he's not suffering, and his time is not up. We went away and had family watch him and I'm so happy that we didn't euthanize him. Having a pet, like a family member does not necessarily coincide with that is convenient. Dukie's lives, eats, sleeps and maybe in his own world but he's alive and deserves to be.

Setting an example of caring for an aging pet, long after he can walk, run and play demonstrates to the younger generation of your family, the example of what it is right rather than what works for your schedule.

So keep your pet alive, your kids are watching...