Preface

Small Animal Euthanasia: Future Practice and Clinical Application

We are delighted to have participated in the publication of this issue of Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice on Euthanasia: Updates on Clinical Practice. This issue is unique in that it is the first of its kind to focus exclusively on the clinical practice of companion animal euthanasia. Increased demand for services focused exclusively on hospice, palliative care, and home euthanasia for companion animals has brought scrutiny to the technical and procedural aspects of small animal euthanasia. Empirical evidence in this context, although sparse, is emerging to guide best practices. The weight of emotional burden coupled with the ethical and moral responsibility practitioners and pet owners face when euthanizing family pets warrants interdisciplinary evaluation and scientific support. The study of small animal euthanasia requires attention from various disciplines. Such a comprehensive approach ensures that the profession devotes the appropriate relevancy and importance the practice of euthanasia requires in everyday clinical practice. This issue evaluates small animal euthanasia from varying perspectives: clinical and technical application and social and psychological impact on the family as caregiver. It also pushes the boundaries of scientific understanding regarding transitional states of consciousness and new areas of study relevant to euthanasia decision making. We intentionally did not include sections on the impact of the practice of euthanasia on veterinary practitioners in the form of compassion fatigue and burnout nor did we address the affects of pet loss and bereavement on caregivers. In addition, we excluded euthanasia techniques and practices for small mammals, birds, and exotics. Although these are worthy topics, we opted to exclude them because of extensive existing professional and academic literature on these topics. This issue seeks to explore areas that have previously been overlooked, such as comparison to the terminology and practice of medical aid in dying in human medicine and our current understanding of brain states in the context
of euthanasia. We hope this issue proves fascinating in its own right and at the same
time is relevant to everyday practice.

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