

### **Veterinary Euthanasia Techniques: A Practical Guide**

KA Cooney, JR Chappell, RJ Callan and BA Connally (2012). Published by Wiley-Blackwell, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 8SQ, UK 197 pages Paperback (ISBN 978-0-4709-5918-3). Price £37.99.

This new book has been written with the aim of providing veterinary practitioners with a practical summary of the scientific literature on veterinary euthanasia. The book covers euthanasia procedures for a wide variety of species encountered in veterinary practice and touches on all aspects of the euthanasia process, from decision-making and client considerations to aftercare of the body. The main focus of the book, however, is on providing practical guidance on technique.

The book is divided into six chapters: 'Client considerations'; 'Equipment'; 'Positioning and restraint'; 'Pre-euthanasia sedation and anaesthesia'; 'Euthanasia techniques' and 'Body aftercare'. Each chapter provides an overview relevant to all species which is then followed by sections detailing species-specific considerations. The latter considerations are divided into 'Dogs and cats', 'Exotics' (ferrets, rabbits, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds and fish), 'Horses' and 'Livestock'. The guide does not cover some of the techniques used in laboratory medicine, wildlife control or mass depopulation scenarios and may therefore be of less use to practitioners working in these fields.

The book has been arranged in a logical manner and is suitable for use as a quick-reference guide. It is also generously illustrated. Techniques are described clearly and thoroughly and the advantages and disadvantages of alternative methods are discussed, in addition to how best to deal with potential complications. The variety of species and techniques covered by this book will make it particularly useful for when practitioners find themselves in unfamiliar or challenging situations.

The chapters on 'Client considerations' and 'Pre-euthanasia sedation and anaesthesia' are well considered and will hopefully assist practitioners in identifying ways to improve the euthanasia process for both their patients and clients. In parts, the book feels like it has been written to add flesh to the bones of the new 2012 American Medical Association (AVMA) *Guidelines on Euthanasia*. Certainly, the use of

the AVMA terms such as 'conditionally acceptable method' and 'adjunctive method' throughout the text strengthens this supposition. Unfortunately, this may be seen to limit the book's relevance to an audience outside of the USA.

There are also a couple of instances in the book where the animal welfare implications of certain recommendations appear to be of secondary importance. It is well known that fish find high concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> aversive, yet only the technical challenges of using CO<sub>2</sub> for the euthanasia of fish are discussed. Likewise, advice given for dealing with the euthanasia of injured horses at public events suggests that it is acceptable to delay euthanasia (sedating the horse for the safety of handlers in the meantime) in order to safeguard the sensibilities of the public.

Although perhaps beyond the remit of a review for this journal, communication skills are an essential aspect of the euthanasia of companion animals in practice and, arguably, the part that is most often poorly performed. Future editions of this book could expand on this aspect of the euthanasia consultation. Another improvement would be to create a dedicated quick-reference appendix containing the various drug dosage tables, with consistent units used for the recommended drug dosages. Consideration of drugs available outside of the USA may also increase the book's relevance to readers resident elsewhere.

On balance, the authors of this new book have succeeded in providing a practical guide to the euthanasia techniques for all species the practising veterinarian is likely to encounter. Although I would not recommend it as a book you 'must buy', it is still likely to be useful reading for all members of the veterinary team involved in euthanasia, with helpful tips for the novice and experienced alike.

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### **Erratum**

In the review of the book by RW Blowey and AD Weaver: *Colour Atlas of Diseases and Disorders of Cattle, Third Edition*, (*Animal Welfare* [2012], 21 [3], p 443), the name of one of these authors was misspelt. The authors should have been presented as above. We apologise for this error.