THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Hospice and palliative care

Citation for published version:

Flecknell, P, Clutton, E, Murphy, K, Bradbury, G & Taylor, P 2016, 'Hospice and palliative care', *Veterinary Record*, vol. 178, no. 19, pp. 476. <https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.i2516>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1136/vr.i2516](https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.i2516)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Veterinary Record

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Comparative Biology Centre
Medical School
Framlington Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 4HH

Professor P.A. Flecknell
Director

Tel: 0191 222 6715
Fax: 0191 222 8688

28/4/2016

Dear Sir

We heartily agree with the letter from Prof and Mrs Noakes written in response to the review article "Veterinary hospice and palliative care: a comprehensive review of the literature" (Goldberg, 2016). The review highlights the need for "scholarly activity" to progress the use of hospice care for terminally ill animals. We would suggest that rather than scholarly research, a careful consideration of the ethical issues involved in this area should be given priority. However good the standard of care, it is highly unlikely that the pain or distress experienced by terminally ill animals will be eliminated. Unlike humans, we do not believe that companion animals would consider an increased period of terminal illness to be balanced by a "benefit" of continued human contact or companionship.

It is, of course, difficult to respond to the demands of owners for ever more invasive procedures on pet animals, when such interventions may well not be in the best interests of the animal itself. As Prof and Mrs Noakes point out, we have the ability to resolve animal suffering by applying euthanasia - a privilege of our profession that prompts envy in many of our medical colleagues - and their patients, and one which we believe we would be foolish to eschew.

The issues raised by hospice care should be considered together with the related ethical concerns the profession is facing when high-risk procedures form part of the treatment options for a companion animal. Our duty of care to animals, rather than to their owners, should be given priority and the question asked, "Who benefits most from hospice care – the owner or the animal - or perhaps the veterinarian?"

Yours sincerely,

Prof Paul Flecknell, MA, VetMB, PhD, DLAS, DECVAA, DECLAM, (Hon)DACLAM, FRSB, Dr.h.c. Professor of Laboratory Animal Science and Director, Comparative Biology Centre, Newcastle University, Newcastle, NE2 4HH

Prof Eddie Clutton, BVSc, MRCVS, DVA, DECVAA, MRCA
Professor of Veterinary Anaesthesiology and Director, Wellcome Trust Critical Care Laboratory
for Large Animals, Roslin Institute, Easter Bush, Midlothian EH25 9RG

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Clutton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Kathy Murphy, BVetMed, CLAS, CVA
Veterinary Anaesthetist University of Oxford, UK and Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology Icahn
School of Medicine, New York, USA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AG Bradbury', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Guen Bradbury, MA, Vet MB, MRCVS
Innovation Consultant, Innovia Technology, St Andrews House, St Andrew's Rd, Cambridge CB4
1DL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Polly Taylor', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Polly Taylor MA VetMB PhD DVA DipECVAA MRCA MRCVS
Taylor Monroe, Little Downham, Ely, Cambs