

**RESOLUTION #9—2017
Regular Annual Session**

Submitted by—
Board of Directors

REVISED POLICY ON VETERINARY HOSPICE END-OF-LIFE CARE

RESOLVED, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adopt the revised policy on Veterinary Hospice Care as noted in the [attachment](#). *(shown below)*

Guidelines for Veterinary Hospice End-of-Life Care

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recognizes that clients facing terminal illness in companion animals may desire veterinary hospice end-of-life care for their animals. As offered within the context of veterinary practice, and as consistent with veterinary practice acts, veterinary hospice end-of-life care gives clients time to make decisions regarding a companion animal with a terminal illness or condition and to prepare for the pending death of the animal. The AVMA views veterinary hospice end-of-life care as care that will allow a terminally ill animal to live comfortably at home or in an appropriate facility, and does not believe that such care precludes that includes the option of euthanasia. The animal's comfort and quality of the animal life must always be considered when veterinary hospice end-of-life care is provided.

As is the case in human hospice programs, animal patients must have a terminal illness with a short life expectancy. The veterinary hospice end-of-life care team consists of the must include a veterinarian and trained staff who provide expertise in palliative care and pain control for such terminally ill animals. Maximizing the benefits of veterinary hospice requires that family/household members participate in the care of the patient. It is desirable to include other counseling and care professionals, however advice regarding veterinary care should only be provided by veterinary professionals.

Although veterinarians and their staff also benefit from Maximizing the benefits of veterinary hospice end-of-life care by assisting requires that any family/household members attached to the animal participate in the care of the patient. Hospice End-of-life care facilities for animals not in private ownership should ensure that care decisions are made with the full participation of a veterinary team empowered to act as advocates for the animal, and that arrangements are made to protect the animals in the event of financial difficulties or change of management.

The International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care (IAAHPC) offers a certification program that includes a standard of practice for animal hospice and palliative care services. Certification by the IAAHPC confirms adherence to this standard and demonstrates a level of excellence in the hospice end-of-life care provided by practitioners, and the AVMA endorses the 2016 AAHA/IAAHPC End-of-Life Care Guidelines.*

Hospice End-of-life care staff should understand that when using the term hospice end-of-life care, what is generally implied is the provision of palliative care (including medications) for the remainder of a pet's life followed by humane euthanasia if an acceptable quality of life can no longer be maintained. This differs somewhat from the human hospice approach where euthanasia is not looked upon as an endpoint.

The respectful closure of each unique human-animal bond through end-of-life services provided by veterinarians are can be time-consuming and require a considerable commitment for the veterinarian with regard to the medical needs of the patient and to the emotional needs of the client. Not, and not all veterinarians are in a position to offer these services. Veterinarians or veterinary Veterinary hospitals that are unable to offer end-of-life care should be prepared to refer clients to another veterinarian who can is in a position to offer these services. Where available, preference should be given to IAAHPC-certified veterinary hospice end-of-life care services. Referring this activity a client for hospice end-of-life care does not infer imply that excellent care is not being delivered by the referring veterinarian, but provides more options for the client an option for those clients specifically desiring to access veterinary more comprehensive hospice end-of-life care.

A number of issues should be addressed when veterinary hospice care is provided:

- Family/household dynamics are a consideration when deciding whether veterinary hospice care is appropriate. Veterinarians should counsel clients regarding the severity of their animal's illness or condition and the expected outcome. Clients also should be informed of their responsibilities as well as the services to be provided by the

	Board of Directors	House Advisory Committee	Reference Committee #2	House of Delegates
Recommend Approval	X	X		
Recommend Disapproval				
Recommend Referral to...				
No Recommendation				
Recommend Postpone Indefinitely				