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EDITOR'S LETTER

Easing the Emotional Strain

For the veterinary team, end-of-life discussions with pet owners can be daunting. The weight of responsibility and the emotional connection to the pet make these conversations incredibly stressful. In this issue, Dr. Susan Nelson et al detail the strategies we can employ to navigate this difficult journey with compassion and understanding (p. 82). Such strategies can help to relieve the emotional strain from our job, but there are now ancillary services we could lean on at these times. Pet hospice care is one such example. It has the goal of making a pet's final days more pleasant with the proper use of pain medications, dietary strategies, and human interaction. When considering hospice care, pet parents will often look to the veterinary team, so we need to familiarize ourselves with the option. It may feel like we are relinquishing our responsibilities. However, over the years it has become clear that it is not possible to hold on to all aspects of our job while maintaining quality of life. It is time that solutions include utilizing services available to alleviate the burden on ourselves while also improving the experience for our pets.

WHAT WE'RE READING

In each issue, a member of our Editorial Advisory Board will share a recent open access publication, including their key takeaways and its practical conclusion.

Prognosis in Meningoencephalitis of Unknown Origin in Dogs: Risk Factors Associated With Survival, Clinical Relapse, and Long-Term Disability

Gonçalves R, De Decker S, Walmsley G, Maddox TW
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jvim.17037>

WHAT WAS INVESTIGATED? Meningoencephalitis of unknown origin (MUO) in dogs is a group of idiopathic inflammatory diseases, presumed to be immune-mediated, which include granulomatous meningoencephalomyelitis. Despite therapy with appropriate immunosuppressive medication, up to one-third of dogs with MUO are reported to die within 1 week of diagnosis. This retrospective study of 447 dogs with MUO aimed to identify prognostic variables.

WHAT WAS FOUND? Nearly two-thirds of the dogs were still alive at 6 months and nearly 50% of dogs seen in follow-up had a relapse with a median time to onset of 7 months. Negative associations for survival to 6 months included dog breed (e.g., pugs), the presence of seizure activity, weakness, and a high overall neurologic disability score. Incomplete resolution of neurologic signs was seen in 36% of survivors and was associated with a relapse at a future date.

TAKE-HOME POINTS

- MUO is a devastating disease affecting dogs, with just over a 60% survival rate at 6 months after treatment initiation.
- Those that survive can be left with residual neurological signs, which is a risk factor for relapse of disease that affects half of survivors.

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