Description: It is the standard operating procedures of the Veterinary Health Complex (VHC) to provide quality patient care to our patients and excellent customer service to our clients. This includes establishing procedures for handling the difficult circumstances surround the euthanasia process.

I. VHC Procedures:

1. Background
   a. The bond formed between humans and animals is unique. It can be very difficult to cope with the loss of a companion animal; this loss may be similar to losing a family member causing a wide range of emotions from our clients.
   b. The VHC takes into account the differences in owners to help them find their own way to cope with their loss.

2. Client Communication
   a. Prior to Euthanasia
      i. For terminally ill or severely injured patients, euthanasia should be presented as an option to all clients with a client/veterinary relationship.
      ii. The actual euthanasia process should be discussed, including administration of drugs, potential reactions to euthanasia solutions delivered, how long the process will take, etc.
      iii. When possible, all billing responsibilities should be finalized before euthanasia procedure.
      iv. All documentation should be discussed and signed. See euthanasia consent form.
      v. For decisions regarding disposition of remains see the following SOPs:
         1. Clinical SOP 12 – “Deceased Patients/Handling” Procedures
         2. Administrative SOP 63 – “Dead on Arrival” Procedures
         3. Administrative SOP 60 – “Necropsy/Unanticipated Patient Death” Procedures
      vi. If owners are unable to decide on disposition of remains, 24hrs will be given to finalize a decision. See Clinical SOP 12

3. Prior to Euthanasia
   a. Ensure that an area has been designated for the euthanasia procedure. The following are acceptable areas for euthanasia, listed in order of preference:
      i. Client quiet visitation room
      ii. Small Animal ICU visitation room
      iii. Exam room
      iv. Cage or stall side, if patient is unable to be moved to another location
      v. Large Animal Hospital locations:
         1. Behind necropsy – rubber mats provided for ground cover
         2. Recovery stall - Breezeway
   b. All appropriate signage should be displayed when euthanasia is in progress to prohibit people or other staff from passing through during the euthanasia process (i.e. Euthanasia in progress, please be quiet).
   c. Prepare all essential supplies for the euthanasia process including syringes, flush solution, euthasol solution, stethoscope, needles, alcohol, etc.
   d. IV catheters should be placed prior to owner's final visitation if necessary. The most appropriate large gauge catheter will be used.
e. Allow the client to visit with the pet prior to euthanasia. There need not be a time limit on this visitation; however it should be discussed prior to the event to lessen the burden of decisions on the client during the process.

4. Euthanasia Staffing Guidelines Euthanasia may be administered by an intern, resident, senior faculty member or student on the case. Staff will not be permitted to administer euthasol solution. Students may not administer euthasol solution during a witness euthanasia.
   a. A designated staff member should also be present to help comfort clients, help with any administration difficulties, hand all supplies to the veterinarian administering euthasol and for any backup support needed for potential restraint of patient.
   b. Veterinarians performing euthanasia are licensed and supplemented with on-the-job training, oversight and support.
   c. Anesthetic and or analgesia will be administered anytime an animal is in distress or at risk of pain or suffering during the procedure. Subject to clinician discretion.

5. Client present for euthanasia
   a. At all times, administrator should discuss each step of the procedure before implementation.
   b. All present parties should remain calm, speaking comfortingly and reassuringly to the animal and to the client.
   c. Gloves should be worn by administrator and any support staff.
   d. Euthasol solution will be drawn into a syringe prior to entering room and place of euthanasia using approved charting system accounting for body weight of animal.
   e. If a catheter is being used:
      i. Use a clave connecter, unclamp the line to allow solutions to be administered
      ii. Use a designated “flush” solution to ensure catheter is patent
      iii. Remove needle from euthanasia syringe
      iv. Connect euthanasia syringe to the clave, gently draw back to ensure catheter is still patent and administer full amount of syringe at a quick steady rate
      v. Disconnect euthanasia syringe and connect “flush” syringe. Administer full amount of syringe at a quick steady rate
      vi. Disconnect “flush” syringe and allow a few moments for drugs to enter system and euthasol solution to take effect, if it has not already done so.

6. If a syringe or “butterfly” catheter is being used:
   a. An appropriately trained staff member should be present for all procedures requiring the use of a syringe or “butterfly” catheter.
   b. A vein should be identified prior to procedure and must take into account the following items:
      i. As far away from the client as possible
      ii. Stability of vein being used
      iii. As far away from the head of the patient as possible to allow for comfort from the client at the head
      iv. Staff member should hold vein with slight pressure to allow tension on the vein
      v. A new needle will be used on the syringe or a new “butterfly” catheter and inserted into the vein bevel side up
      vi. Slight aspiration is applied to the syringe to ensure blood flows and insertion is into a vein
      vii. Staff will release pressure on the leg, still providing appropriate restrain to ensure no movement of the limb
      viii. Full amount of syringe is administered at a quick and steady rate
      ix. Place a 2x2 gauze over the insertion site of the needle prior to removal
      x. Remove syringe with needle attached or “butterfly” catheter once administration of solution is final
      xi. Place a vet wrap bandage over insertion site and 2x2 to keep gauze in place
      xii. Continue to comfort patient and clients during the process

7. After solution administration
   a. Use approved methods to verify death of patient.
   b. Allow clients to continue visit if previously discussed, or escort clients out of area, keeping a designated individual with the deceased patient at all times.
8. Verification of Death
   a. Intern, resident or senior faculty member will verify signs of death using as many recommended methods
      as necessary to verify death, including: watching for signs of breathing; palpating the animal for a
      heartbeat, breath or pulse; checking for a heartbeat with the stethoscope; eye reflex.

9. Client not present for euthanasia:
   a. All procedures should be followed as directed as if client were present
   b. Allow for appropriate amount of time for visitation prior to escorting owners from room, designated staff
      member will remain with patient

10. Client not present for decision or visitation
    a. All veterinarians must inform client of financial responsibilities prior to acceptance of euthanasia request
       via telephone
    b. Upon verbal acceptance of euthanasia request via telephone, a 2nd verbal verification must occur.
    c. A student, trained staff member or another veterinarian directly responsible for the patient's care can
       confirm verbal verification of euthanasia request by the client via telephone. 
    d. Both the assigned clinician and other responsible party must document acceptance of request in medical
       record and on Euthanasia consent form.
    e. Prior to preparing the animal for euthanasia and prior to euthanizing, paperwork is finalized and checked
       by two staff members to ensure the animal being euthanized has been selected for euthanasia and to
       ensure mistakes are not made resulting in euthanasia of the wrong animal:
      i. Staff checks for identification
      ii. Staff re-verifies all paperwork including cage/kennel card, medical record, and any animal ID
          information.

11. Wake County Animal Care, Control and Adoption Center Cases
    a. See Administrative SOP 49

12. Good Samaritan Cases
    a. See Administrative SOP 14

13. Documentation
    a. All euthasol solutions are DEA regulated and must be documented appropriately.
    b. A Controlled Substance Tracking Sheet must be used with all DEA regulated substances. See Pharmacy
       section of SOP Manual
    c. All procedures, including euthanasia will be documented on the patient treatment sheet, including time,
       date, and dosage of drug administration. A clinician’s signature must accompany all treatment sheet
       documentation. See Clinical SOP 8.
    d. If client cannot be present for signatures attending clinician and designated staff member, student or
       other clinician must sign all documents as verification.

14. Dosage/ Drug Administration

   Acceptable Dosage Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Solution Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.5kg</td>
<td>1mL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0kg</td>
<td>2mL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.6kg</td>
<td>3mL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
   
   1mL/10lbs

15. Verification of Death
    a. Intern, resident or senior faculty member will verify signs of death using as many recommended methods
       as necessary to verify death, including: watching for signs of breathing; palpating the animal for a
       heartbeat, breath or pulse; checking for a heartbeat with the stethoscope; eye reflex.

16. Disposition after death
    a. Deceased bodies will be handled with dignity and care. Bodies will be discreetly within the hospitals with
       an effort of avoiding major client areas including the lobby/waiting area. Small Animal Hospital patients
       leaving for private burial will be transported out of the building via the Animal Scan entrance.
    b. No patients will be left alone, bagged or placed in the refrigerator/cooler until after death has been verified
       by a licensed veterinarian.
    c. After confirmation, follow Clinical SOP 12.
For Necropsies see Clinical SOP 10 and follow Necropsy request form

For Cremation/Private Cremation see Clinical SOP 12

The following other services and/or information are available for grieving clients to help through decisions and the loss of their family member:

Faithful Friends Pet Cremation Service (919) 874-0014
AVMA “How Do I Know It Is Time?” Pet Euthanasia pamphlet
Grief and Loss Support Resources pamphlet
Betsy Taylor, Ph.D. Counseling Services (919) 513-6008
Pet Grief and Loss Support Group: Tuesdays 6:30pm-8pm with Dr. Betsy Taylor, Ph.D.