

Exceptional Care to the Very End

H. Renee Chalmers Hoyncck van Papendrecht,
DVM



Compassion is the hallmark of this state-of-the-art Netherlands practice, which features exceptional services related to euthanasia of patients and assistance for grieving clients in addition to thorough veterinary care.

Dierenkliniek Nieuw Den Helder is a small animal clinic in the northern Netherlands. Our team consists of 2 veterinarians and 2 nurses. In addition to routine care, we provide emergency services and house calls, the latter mostly for euthanasia. Because we do not have specialty clinics nearby, we strive to provide “one-stop shopping” services. We do almost all laboratory analysis and other testing in-house, including: blood, urine, and fecal analysis; cytology; digital radiography; electrocardiography; and echocardiography. Only complicated cases and patients requiring orthopedic surgery are referred to other clinics.

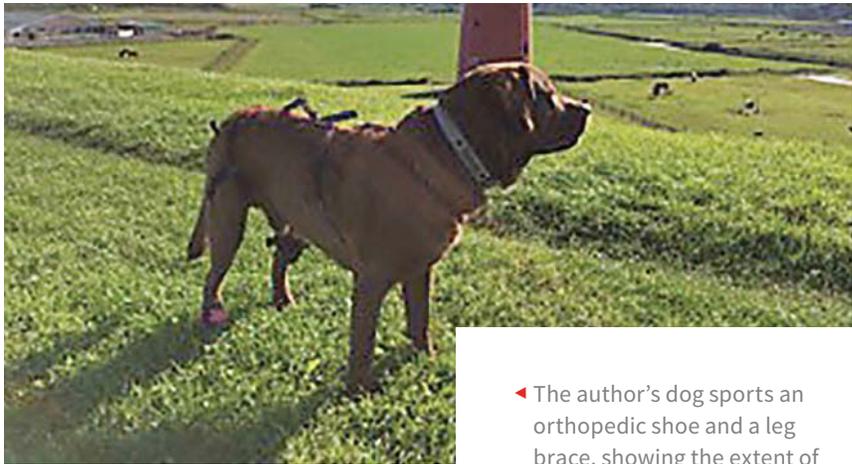
Special Characteristics

Delivering state-of-the-art veterinary medicine with compassion for clients, patients, and team members is our hallmark. Our practice facilities allow us to make a

quick, accurate diagnosis and relieve both animal suffering and the anxiety or uncertainty of our pet owners. In line with our mission, 1 focus of our clinic is the process of euthanasia and assisting grieving clients. In this regard, we probably do more than any other clinic in the country. We work closely with our clients to ensure that we provide a painless death to patients in need of such care and comfort for clients before and after the pet's death.

We are fortunate and privileged because we have all that we need to treat our patients thoroughly and compassionately. My own dog is a case in point. I adopted this beautiful dog when she was 8 weeks old. At 6 weeks of age, she had lost all the pads of 1 paw. From overextension and postoperative complications, she ruptured both the cranial cruciate and patellar ligaments of another leg. She now sports an orthopedic shoe on 1 limb and a brace on another!

All the necessary drugs are available, but some are under scrutiny; for example, international efforts are targeting the availability of ketamine (see **The Necessity of One Voice**). Although we can now dispense drugs, this capability is under risk as part of government efforts to



◀ The author's dog sports an orthopedic shoe and a leg brace, showing the extent of care possible for the author's patients.

address the issue of antimicrobial resistance.

The only current impediment to care is that of financial ability on the part of some clients.

Practice Standards, CE, & Professionalism

In the Netherlands, continuing education is not obligatory, nor is clinic certification. Voluntary certification as a "Star" clinic is an option, and Dierenkliniek Nieuw Den Helder is in the process of achieving this distinction by spring 2016. There are now only 43 Star clinics in the country. The national professional network is well-developed. The Netherlands Association of Companion Animals (NACAM) provides various types of professional support. I have served on the NACAM board for 6 years and also as an NACAM Assembly

Member of the WSAVA. I have also been a member of various committees dealing with ethics and issues related to breeding disorders.

Culture & Attitudes

Animals are considered possessions under the law, but animal welfare legislation prohibits unnecessary invasive procedures (eg, tail docking, declawing, ear clipping, vocal cord removal). These laws are not well-enforced, but breeders are not allowed to show animals on which such procedures have been performed, and public sentiment against these procedures is strong. Legislation also covers which animals can be kept domestically. We now have animal-humane officers, a new development in the last few years. The Netherlands is the only country in the world that has a political party defending the rights of animals,

Partij voor de Dieren, with 2 seats in the Dutch Parliament.

Neutering of bitches is standard at 6 months of age; for male dogs, castration is performed mostly for medical or behavioral reasons only. Euthanasia is considered a necessary and important part of care for animals, a tool for guarding their welfare. Preventive medicine is well-established but not pursued by all clients because of the cost.

Most owners have loving relationships with their pets and describe them as family members. In keeping with these sentiments, we have made care surrounding the patient's end of life an important aspect of the services we provide at Dierenkliniek Nieuw Den Helder. ■