

# Performing good death for animal companions

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# Animal deaths and culture

- Animals as companions with a position as a friend and a family member
  - Deaths of animals living with humans are nearly always undertaken by humans
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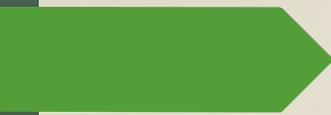
# Euthanasia

- Aim of euthanasia: to avoid excessive suffering
- Pets euthanised at veterinary clinics
- The emergence of horse retirement yards



# Good death

- Death and care
- Practices and conceptions concerning pet and horse euthanasia at veterinary clinics and horse retirement yards



# Written narratives and interviews

- Writing collection on pets in Finland in 2014–2015
  - 186 narratives → 30 about euthanasia at a clinic
  - 28 women, 2 men
- Interviews with horse retirement yard managers in the UK in 2014–2016 (n = 4, work in progress)
  - In collaboration with Dr Alex Franklin (Coventry University)



# Cultural conceptions

- Animal categories
  - Distance from humans
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# Euthanasia

- Translated as 'good death'
- Painless ending to a life that cannot be continued any longer
- Proper conduct in killing the animal

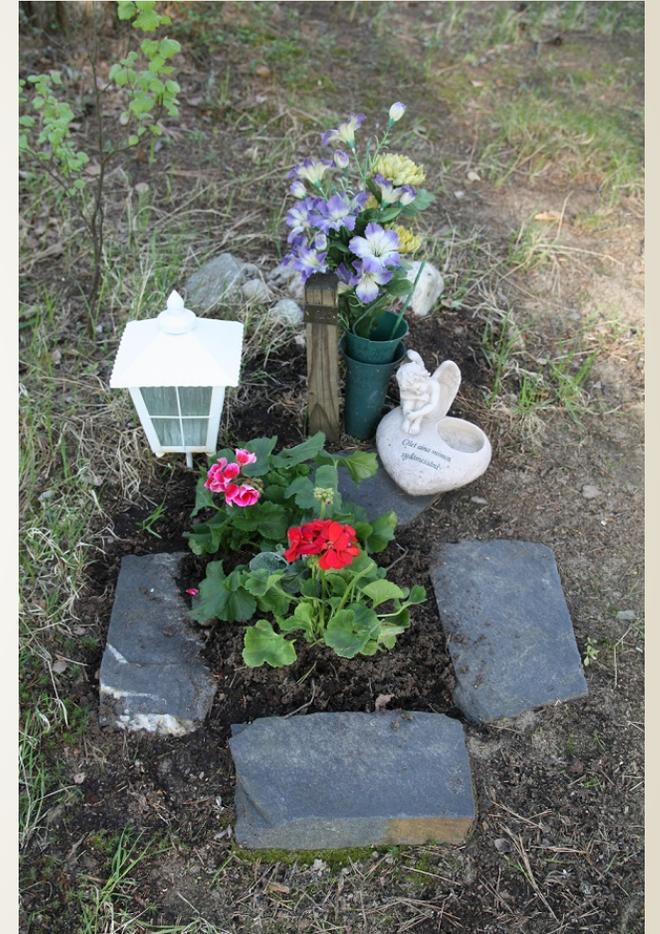


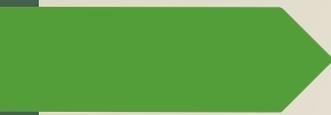
# Good death

- Aristotle: the last moments of life
- Human–animal relationship
- Trust in experts

“ [w]e decided right away that Rosa would have to be shown mercy and be put to sleep”

➤ (SKS KRA. Lemmikit 153–172.2015).





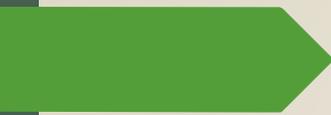
“I was asked if I wanted to be present when all the procedures were done, and I did. The cat took its last breath in my lap. I thought in the end, that the cat left this world in quite a dignified way, without any greater pain or torment”

➤ (SKS KRA. Lemmikit 44–52.2015).

"it's very hard [for the owners] when it comes to also making that decision to put them to sleep, some people really cannot deal with it and they don't see the horse on a daily basis, and I do, so sometimes we have to twist someone's arm and say no it's the time"

➤ (yard manager)



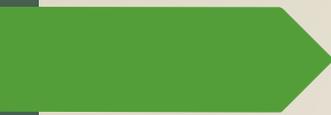


“we’re giving them a sort of end to their life being a true horse.”

➤ (yard manager)

“Well just as I say I think the feeling that I can ... cause the owners peace of mind that their horses are able to move around outside in the sort of situation that I think horses were originally meant for.”

➤ (yard manager)

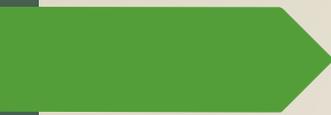


"normally I will sort of encourage people to say their goodbyes and then let us deal with it"

➤ (yard manager)

"if the horse is put down, [...] probably 90% will stay away and 10% will want to come and be there. So. But that's worse. And if a horse is bad, colicing, in pain and they want to come I'll say, I don't think you should come because I don't want them to see their horse like that, it's best if they don't come. It's difficult."

➤ (yard manager)



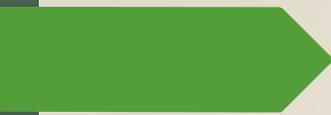
" All of us, the members of the patchwork family, my husband, my daughter, my husband's partner and me (my new husband was not there), we went to the veterinary clinic at Pakila. We gathered in the room, where our dog was first tranquillised. It was as if she had realised her fate. She made a 'goodbye tour': she first went to my ex-husband and lifted her eyes up to his face, went on to the others in the same way and finally came to my feet. I knelt on the ground [...] She looked at me and circled and lay down. Whined softly. There she got the final injection peacefully and passed away."

➤ (SKS KRA. Lemmikit 153–172.2015)

"if something's ill, we'll have to bring its best friend in, and then if they die then we'll leave that horse with them, to see. [...] we let the other horse see him go down and then put him back to his friends. And he took a while, they'll look and they'll call, it's not very nice."

➤ (yard manager)





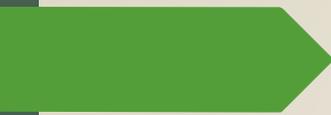
“Black’s muscles started to twitch, and we asked the technician about the reason for this. The vet took Black to another room but brought her soon back and said that the twitching was normal. However, the twitching went on all the way home. It was terrible. The cat clearly did not want to die. Was she still suffering? Black only settled into the final sleep at home. [...] In the morning I noticed that there had been blood dribbling from Black’s nose or mouth. Black’s death never let my mind settle down. It still puzzles me sometimes.”

➤ (SKS KRA. Lemmikit 10–20.2015)

“the shooting is so quick.. and so absolutely accurate and as I say we’ve got it down to such a fine art. [...] it just drops and [...] there’s absolutely no stress. With the injection, you know how with anaesthetics the horses can react differently to the right dose of anaesthetic, if you don’t get the weight absolutely spot on and you do hear some horror stories about horses stuck on fence posts because...”

➤ (yard manager)





# Conclusions

- Good death: human–animal relationships, animals as sentient beings, human expertise
  - Euthanasia as an act of care
  - Control: owner – veterinarian – retirement yard manager
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Thank you!

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