Foreword

Caring for animals is more than a job. For most people who work in the animal-protection field, it’s a calling, and along with the rewards come great emotional hardships. Whether you work at a shelter, a sanctuary, or a veterinary clinic, or in one of the thousands of animal-protection groups in America, every day brings a mix of hope and despair. Even on the best of days, there are disappointments and painful moral choices—and there is always more work to do.

*Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community* is a reminder that, unless we are willing to confront the animal suffering, in all its distressing forms, we cannot fulfill our calling to help fellow creatures in need. More than that, as Drs. Charles R. Figley and Robert G. Roop show us, there are practical ways to manage the emotional challenges and press on each day with the hard work of compassion.

Shelter workers and volunteers in particular will find valuable guidance in *Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community*. They take on shelter work in the hope of saving lives, and often, instead, are filled with grief and guilt at their part in euthanizing animals for whom no space or home can be found. Even while other stray animals are saved every day in those same shelters, it’s a terrible emotional burden, and for those who bear it this book is essential reading.

*Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community* picks up where William H. Smith left off in his 1990 *Euthanasia: The Human Factor*, the first book to study the psychology of compassion fatigue within the animal-care profession. Figley and Roop have collaborated over the years in workshops and counseling sessions for animal-care professionals throughout the country who are dealing with euthanasia and other emotionally painful circumstances. This practical experience makes their book much more than an academic exercise: they have seen the hurt and sorrow of shelter workers up close and know how deep it runs in the profession.
For years, compassion fatigue was an unspoken occupational hazard of humane work. It caused diminished productivity, high attrition rates among shelter workers, and, worst of all, despair. With scholarship, experience, and empathy, Figley and Roop explain the causes, symptoms, and treatments of compassion fatigue. They stress the importance of self-help and offer specific plans that individuals can easily follow to alleviate or mitigate the symptoms of fatigue.

In the vocation of helping and protecting animals in need, all of us must be smart as well as strong. For thousands of men and women called to serve animals, Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community will be a source of both strength and smart advice. The book cannot remove all the hurts that come with our calling. But it will help every reader to regain hope and do the important work that only we can do.

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of the United States