

The Health of Pigs: Nutrition, Housing and Disease Prevention

Edited by John Hill and David Sainsbury (1995). Longman Scientific & Technical, Longman Group Ltd: Harlow. 448pp. Hardback. Obtainable from the Blackwell Science Publications, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0EL, UK (ISBN 0 582 061008 0). Price £58.

Fourth in the Longman Veterinary Health Series is *The Health of Pigs*. Its back cover boasts that it is: '... a state of the art' reference work on the health and welfare of pigs...'. As a recent and struggling PhD student working on the behaviour and welfare of these animals I craved a text that brought together the nutritional, genetic, veterinary and welfare aspects of pig health into a cohesive and integrated book. So, I was eager to read this work.

The Health of Pigs is a multi-author book divided into eleven chapters, which explore: The components of pig health; The economics of disease in pigs; Pig health, environment and housing; Nutrition and health; Pig health and welfare; Genetics and health; Current problems and new approaches to pig health; Preventive medicine; Pig health trends and indicators; The health of outdoor pigs; and finishes with a Comments and summary chapter. Eight of the eleven authors are veterinary surgeons with practical experience of pig health; the remaining three being pig specialists.

Given the practical background of the authors, it is not surprising that this book overflows with common sense; for example, many of the Chapters recognize the importance of stockmanship in pig health. However, in other places the book is in danger of insulting its target audience of veterinarians, pig industry workers, veterinary science and agriculture students. For example, on page 204 we are informed that female pigs have two X-chromosomes and male pigs one X- and one Y-chromosome; surely, such basic information would be known by all the book's target audience.

The book has a number of inconsistencies, the major one being its attitude towards the welfare of pigs. On the back cover much is made of animal welfare, these good intentions are, however, not borne out by the text. Sainsbury, for example, sees nothing wrong with flat-decks for weaners (page 93) or stalls and tethers for sows (page 112). Most scientists involved in research into pig welfare find these two systems of pig production to be abhorrent. Another prominent concern I had was the different attitudes towards castration: Moss, points-out: '... that it is prohibited, except for medical reasons...' (page 199), however, in the Chapter by Brown we are told: '... Castration at the earliest practicable age is essential to limit the stress associated with the procedure...' (page 333). In general, many of the authors give the impression that animal welfare is something that the pig production industry has to put up with rather than acknowledging its genuine importance both for pig health and pig production economics.

Many of the Chapters provide a good basic overview of their subject matter. However, I would not describe any of them as 'state of the art'. A brief examination of the 'References and Further Reading' shows that approximately 50 per cent of the references listed are more than 10 years old. I also noted a lack in the number of eminent pig scientists cited: for example Don Broom, Neil Cameron, Sandra Edwards, Ilias Kyriazakis, Alistair Lawrence, Colin Morgan and John Webb were all conspicuous by their absence. In particular, I found Chapters 4 and 5 to be outdated – little if any acknowledgement was made of the recent advances in pig welfare and nutrition. Moss in Chapter 5 lists 'Five Areas of Concern' for pig welfare and yet fails to address the question of food restricting sows and

boars head-on. Instead it is cursorily dealt with under the heading of 'Close confinement of sows during pregnancy and farrowing' (pages 194–196) and yet many animal welfare researchers now agree that food restriction is a major factor in the development of abnormal (stereotyped) behaviour.

The editors I feel have attempted to produce an accessible book in the field of pig health; this is to be commended, given the opaqueness of many of the research papers published. However, I feel that a better way of doing this would have been to have Chapter 5 co-authored by leading scientists and pig specialists, for example, imagine the brilliance and practicality of a Chapter on 'Nutrition and Health' by Ilias Kyriazakis and John Gadd!

The book is spoiled by the inconsistent use of referencing, for example Moss cited papers fairly frequently, whereas a number of the authors do not cite papers at all. Given the target audience of this book, I expected extensive citing of papers throughout. I also noted a number of missing references (eg Duncan & Dawkins 1983, page 187), a number of references with the wrong year (Bure & Koosman 1980 or 1981?, see pages 198 and 367), a number of authors names misspelt (Helmus or Helms 1981? see pages 200 and 368); I could go on.

The Health of Pigs was an ambitious project, which I think has failed somewhat to deliver the goods. For those looking to find out the basic facts about health and pigs, this book is a good starting point. However, I would recommend that it is consulted in a library given its price tag of £58.

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The Covenant of the Wild: Why Animals Chose Domestication

Stephen Budiansky (1992, published in UK 1994). Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London. 192pp. Hardback. Obtainable from Orion Publishing Group, Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EA (ISBN 0 460 86189 1). Price £16.99.

Of course what we actually do is important, but policies are houses built on the shifting sands of circumstance. What matters most is attitude. Budiansky wrote this book in reaction to one attitude, which gives rise to 'the simplistic stereotypes of man and nature that are being purveyed by an ever more confrontational animal rights movement to an ever more urban audience'. He decries the common idea that domestication was simply imposed by humans on other animals as a folk-tale with no scientific evidence. A folk-tale emerging from Victorian triumphalism in human inventiveness and giving rise to a myth – that the relationship between humans and animals is wholly dominated by humans and solely for human advantage.

Budiansky's intriguing thesis is summed up by his subtitle: the ancestors of our domestic species played an active part in forming relationships with humans which then became, and still remain, symbiotic. This has quite a lot in common with the familiar idea that certain species were pre-adapted to domestication, but he takes it further by using the cooperative behaviour of honey-guides (birds which lead humans to honey) and reindeer (which also gain advantage from humans) as indicators, and taking the dog as his main example. There is archaeological and contemporary evidence that dogs approached humans, for example, to scavenge rather than humans capturing dogs. Budiansky also suggests that his thesis is