

Waterfowl: Health and Management CD-ROM

Produced by WILDPro Multimedia. Obtainable from the Wildlife *Information* Network, The Royal Veterinary College, Royal College Street, London NW1 0TU. Cost: GBP£29.95 for individuals (UK only); US \$50.00 (overseas plus post and packaging). Institutes (25 user passwords plus 25 CD-ROMs) GBP £470 (UK only); US \$675 (Overseas).

It is rare that one has the opportunity to review a source of information that can allow the user such rapid access to so much readily usable data. The material enclosed in this CD-ROM is applicable not only to the UK but also world-wide. The CD-ROM contains some 5000 documents covering details of 160 species and 210 diseases, with 1,200 illustrations and over 1000 references. It is refreshing to use a text that not only references all relevant material from the point of data source but also enables the reader to readily find details of the initial source of the material.

The CD-ROM commences with four main sections:

1. Waterfowl: physical factors (ie those that interact with disease or injury, such as food, habitat, water, predation, space, vegetation)
2. Waterfowl diseases: grouped by cause of the disease
3. Waterfowl species
4. Waterfowl disease agents, such as pathological agents and chemicals, divided by type (eg bacteria, viruses)

There then follows a further section with three interactive flow charts:

1. Bird husbandry and management
2. Disease investigation and management
3. Industry managing wetlands for wildlife

These flow charts take the reader through the 'best practice' approaches to all these situations, as viewed from different perspectives depending upon your location within the chart.

The whole information system is then supported by the following texts in electronic form:

1. The highly acclaimed *Manual of Wildlife Disease*, authored by Milton Friend on behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Although this book will be well known to many readers, the electronic access greatly increases its value. Those accessing it for the first time will be impressed by the practical approach to 'Wildlife' waterfowl disasters and how to approach and investigate each situation.
2. *Wetlands, Industry and Wildlife* — a must for all those working on the wildlife–industry interface including conservation and eco-tourism.
3. *Waterfowl Management Guidelines*, produced by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge — a wealth of practical experience and research-based data from the world's most significant organisation in this field.
4. Proceedings of the Waterfowl Information Network Conference 1999
5. Secretary of States' Standards for Modern Zoos (DETR) — this document relates to upcoming European Zoo Licensing Guidelines, but acts as a good reference base for any modern zoological collection.
6. Swan Sanctuary Code of Practice — sensible, level-headed guidelines for all those crusaders working with injured wild swans.
7. Fact sheet and commonly asked waterfowl questions relating to the 'London Waterfowl Project', which in turn links to the Environmental Agency and covers an overview of water pollution.

On first reading, I was concerned about the poor search facility within the CD-ROM itself. Although access within the CD-ROM is very logical, indexing is based on systems and causes of disease, and the causes of disease are not readily accessed from the clinical signs. The search facility permits searching only page by page, which is of little value if one wants to look up a particular presenting sign. However, a very effective and complete search facility (activated on any chosen word) is effective from the *WILDPro* website itself. The user is clearly instructed how to use this facility. To access the website from the CD-ROM, the user must have their own username and password to hand. The cynic may suggest that this is an attempt to force the user to re-subscribe each year, and hence to generate an annual income for the site. However, once used, one is so impressed by the rapid access to, and ease of searching through, such high quality referenced material and data (which out-performs any other waterfowl reference material known to the reviewer) that an annual subscription seems a small price to pay.

One small criticism is that some of the data are of seasonal relevance, the time of year varying depending on the part of the world in question (eg duck plague vaccination should be seasonally targeted). Drug treatment recommendations are made, but inevitably cannot take into account variability in national licensing or, in the case of the UK, to the 'cascade' (the UK legal directive as to which licensed or unlicensed product you can select to use in what order of preference on any given species). This latter point may well be seen as a weakness in relation to use by UK clinicians.

Overall assessment: this is an absolutely invaluable source of information for all those working with waterfowl (zoological collections, wildlife, conservation, rehabilitation, veterinary care, industry), which has been produced at a very reasonable cost. In simple terms, it is a must for anyone with an interest in or involvement with waterfowl.

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