

### ***Breed Predispositions to Disease in Dogs and Cats***

A Gough and A Thomas (2004). Published by Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK. 248 pp. Paperback (ISBN 1 4051 0748 0). Price £32.50.

This book begins with a short, but concise, discussion of basic genetics, which is certainly adequate. There then follows, in Part I, an alphabetical list of dog breeds and their predispositions to diseases, which are listed according to the body system they affect. This is then followed in Part II by a similar alphabetical list of cat breeds and the diseases to which they are predisposed, again listed according to the body system affected. Although the list of dog breeds is extensive, it doesn't seem to be totally comprehensive and certainly some of the breeds recognised by the Kennel Club in the UK have been omitted. I'm not really in a position to comment on how comprehensive the list of cat breeds is. The final part, Part III, of the book contains a series of short, concise summaries of the diseases that are mentioned in the earlier two sections.

Like other books designed to provide similar information, this book suffers from not comprehensively indicating how prevalent the conditions are in those breeds where they have been described. This can't be seen as a criticism because, for the most part, the data do not exist to allow prevalences to be determined. However, this is the first such book I have seen that begins to address this weakness. Where available, data on the relative risks and the ratio of the risk of the disease occurring in the breed to the risk of the disease occurring in the general population have been included, although I would personally have liked to see a better referencing system that told me where these data had been obtained. My only major criticism is that I thought that the book should have a better indexing system. It is fine if you use the book starting from a particular breed, but if you want to use it to find information about a particular disease, then it can be time consuming and frustrating to search through the final section. A better indexing of this section would have allowed the reader to go directly to the information summary on a particular disease.

As stated in the Introduction, the book's main utility will be to veterinary surgeons and this is clearly the group to which the information in the book is aimed. I think that this book will be of great benefit to the veterinary surgeon and I would certainly recommend all vets to purchase a copy, if they haven't done so already. I am less convinced about the value of such books, not just this one, to the general dog breeder and owner. The extensive lists of conditions assigned to certain breeds can be on the one hand confusing and on the other extremely worrying. Without data on breed prevalences, which for most conditions do not exist, it is difficult for breeders and owners to make sense of this information and make their own priorities with regard to the various breed predispositions.

A number of diseases listed in this book are increasingly imposing disease burdens on affected breeds and pose a real

challenge to breeders to control their spread through selective breeding programmes. Of course, in order for breeders to impose such selection they need to have accurate diagnoses of any dogs that might be considered as potential parents. This book will certainly be of help in directing veterinary surgeons to the required diagnoses.

In summary, I think this is a very useful book that will be of great value to the veterinary surgeon faced with dogs and cats presenting with a particular set of symptoms.

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### ***BSAVA Manual of Reptiles (Second Edition)***

Edited by SJ Girdling and P Raito (2004). Published by Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK. 350 pp. Paperback (ISBN 0 90521 475 7). Price £89.00.

Reptiles are becoming increasingly popular pets. According to a survey carried out by the American Pet Product Manufacturing Association the number of reptile-owning households in the USA has risen to 3.9 million in 2000; a 44% increase since 1998. Comparable figures are not available for the UK; however, the 49% increase between 2001 and 2002 in reptiles arriving at the Animal Reception Centre, Heathrow Airport, most of which are destined for the pet trade, indicates a similar trend (RSPCA 2004). This taxon, however, is not routinely covered during the training of veterinary surgeons, and general practitioners often feel ill-equipped to take on the challenge of treating this diverse and fascinating group of animals. The BSAVA (British Small Animal Veterinary Association) Manual of Reptiles seeks to bridge this knowledge gap and provide a user-friendly guide to reptile medicine and surgery.

Many will be familiar with the first edition of the manual published in 1992. In the last decade considerable advances have been made, particularly in the fields of diagnostics, surgery, nutrition and infectious disease. This is reflected in the completely upgraded second edition, which includes the addition of new chapters on these topics. One of the most noticeable differences between the editions is the abundance of colour photographs incorporated throughout the text in the second edition. These are particularly welcomed in the chapters on endoscopy, surgery and parasitology.

The 24 chapters are written by 28 authors from both the UK and USA. Most of the authors are directly involved in reptile clinical practice. This personal experience shows through in the text and is one of the main strengths of the manual. However, as with many multi-author texts, overlap between subjects covered in the different chapters is common and there are some minor inconsistencies and differences in opinion (eg what is the optimal composition of electrolyte solutions used for fluid therapy). For the most part the editors have done a good job at cross referencing where overlap occurs.

The manual is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with husbandry, welfare, nutrition and breeding. This

section is an important starting point for any clinician as deficiencies in the captive environment contribute to many of the problems seen in reptile practice. The tables provide a quick reference guide to the husbandry and breeding requirements of some of the more commonly kept species and are particularly useful, as are the text boxes in the nutrition chapter giving worked examples of how to assess and formulate diets.

The second part of the manual focuses on veterinary procedures: diagnostics, therapeutics, anaesthesia, surgery and post mortem examination. These chapters are clearly laid out and are peppered with practical tips, photographs and diagrams showing how these techniques can be put into practice. The advice for auxiliary staff in the chapter on physical examination, on what information clients should bring to their first appointments (eg husbandry records and photographs of their vivarium) and guidelines on transporting animals safely to the clinic will not only save time and provide the clinician with useful information, but should also give the client confidence in the professionalism of the practice.

The third part of the manual covers disorders of the different organ systems and infectious disease. Again, photographs and text boxes accompany the readable and user-friendly text. Finally, the appendices contain a formulary — a list of differential diagnoses by clinical sign — including page references to the main text, special consideration for the handling and treatment of venomous reptiles, and a section on CITES and UK legislation.

Although directed primarily at veterinary practitioners in general practice, this book should also appeal to zoo veterinarians, veterinary nurses and keen herpetologists. This text is not exhaustive and confines itself principally to the more common species and conditions seen in UK general practice (eg there is little information on medicine and surgery of the crocodylians). However, I feel that the manual successfully fulfils its mission to provide the practitioner with both the tools and the confidence to provide high quality veterinary care to reptiles, and hence should contribute significantly to improving the welfare of reptiles in captivity.

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#### Reference

**Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)** 2004 *Handle With Care: a look at the exotic animal pet trade*. RSPCA: Horsham, West Sussex, UK

#### Dog

S McHugh (2004). Published by Reaktion Books, 79 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3JU, UK. 224 pp. Paperback (ISBN 1 86189 203 9). Price £12.95.

Susan McHugh starts by telling us that “Like dogs themselves, dog literature abounds and, in part because of this wealth of material, dog books tend to lose in coherence what they gain in comprehensiveness.” She goes on to tell us that such texts are subject to “randomness” and that even

“dog people” find them tedious. Sadly I have to agree, and this book proves no exception to the rule.

The book is divided into four long chapters. The first attempts to trace the history of dogs. As with much of the book, there is no attempt to do so in a logical or chronological fashion. Rather it starts by noting that the physical range in dogs’ size is huge and goes on to note the attitudinal differences between the Walt Disney characters Pluto and Goofy. There is, however, a wealth of fascinating trivia about the origins of dogs and the manner in which they have been influenced by and have influenced a variety of historical and mythical events. This chapter, and indeed the whole book, is redeemed by the superb illustrations. There are 110 in total, 23 of them in colour, and they vary from reproductions of film posters, to pictures of ancient canine art and a caricature of Saddam Hussein as a dangerous dog. There is also a multitude of references for each chapter and these also vary enormously in character from modern scientific texts to ancient writings. It is probably here that the book has most value, although the index is poor.

The second chapter intends to elucidate the history of breeds. Again, the manner in which the chapter progresses shows no sign of a logical approach. Many breeds are mentioned in a historical context but several are ignored. There is no real attempt to define the aetiology of the breed groups and much is made of the supposed euphemisms of the smaller breeds as sexual objects reflecting on their owners. Breed and the social class of their owners are, apparently, inextricably linked.

Similarly, the next chapter, which is entitled ‘Mutts’, shows how the relationship between pedigree and mongrel dogs has been used in a multitude of texts to illustrate the relationship between black and white, rich and poor, and indigenous people and their invading conquerors. While some of the fiction used is no doubt fascinating, one gets the impression that the inferences drawn from it may not have been the primary thought in the author’s mind while writing the original text.

The final chapter entitled ‘Dog Futures’ discusses the use of dogs in research institutions, their place in cartoons and the images portrayed, and their place in modern fiction. One fascinating fact to emerge is that Laika, the first Russian space dog, is said to have died of severe trauma some hours into the mission. How the trauma was caused is not revealed. A whole section is devoted to scooping the poop and I have yet to decide why it should be given such prominence! What is revealed is how different North American attitudes are to dogs compared to those prevalent in Britain.

If you want a book full of interesting anecdotes about dogs to read on the way home on the Underground which you can put down at will, then this is the book for you. If you expect a full history of the dog set out in a methodical manner, look elsewhere!

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