

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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