

BSAVA Manual of Exotic Pet and Wildlife Nursing

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The *BSAVA Manual of Exotic Pet and Wildlife Nursing* was published by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association in 2012. This manual joins a long list of titles relevant to clinicians and others who work with exotic animals and wildlife including the *Manual of Psittacine Birds*, the *Manual of Raptors, Pigeons and Passerine Birds* and many others. This particular publication is primarily designed for veterinary nurses (technicians) to provide an understanding of the care involved in providing medical support for exotic pets and wildlife. While this audience will be well-served by the information presented in this book, veterinarians, wildlife rehabilitators and others will also be interested in the content.

Chapters are written by veterinarians and veterinary nurses who are well known for their experience and expertise in treating exotic pets and wildlife. The book follows a logical sequence from the initial consultation to the biology and husbandry of representative mammals, birds and reptiles, followed by chapters detailing the hospital ward, nursing of hospitalised patients, anaesthesia and analgesia, diagnostic imaging, surgical nursing, laboratory techniques and outpatient care. Each chapter begins with a clear list of the information to be found in that section. Within each chapter, key points are highlighted in text boxes, relevant tables are presented, and excellent quality colour photographs, illustrations and radiographs are effectively used to enhance the text. Self-assessment questions are provided at the end of each chapter in order for readers to determine their level of comprehension of the material.

A particularly well-written chapter is the first one titled 'Initial consultation'. This chapter provides telephone advice on how to identify exotic pet and wildlife emergencies, tips for safe transportation to the hospital and strategies to reduce stress in the hospital. A useful addition to this chapter would have been the inclusion of information about determining if young wildlife are truly orphaned and, if not, the importance of leaving them in the wild for their parents to provide optimal care. In addition to telephone advice, there is information about the nurse's role in obtaining a history, safe handling techniques for a variety of species, triage of emergency cases and the core principles of the clinical examination. Much of the advice that is presented in this chapter centres on maintaining animal comfort and reducing stress. For instance, callers are advised to keep reptiles at their preferred optimal temperature zone during transport, hospital staff members are given tips on reducing visual and auditory stress in these species and the importance of avoiding ferret/rabbit (predator/prey) interactions in the hospital environment is emphasised. The statement that "Veterinary practices have a moral obligation to take in

wildlife from members of the public" is particularly appreciated. Interestingly, because this is a British publication, the wildlife species that are highlighted in this book centre around those that are commonly seen in the UK, eg foxes, badgers, hedgehogs and squirrels. Zoonotic diseases are similarly relevant to native species seen in the UK — lyssavirus is mentioned as a possible zoonosis when handling bats though the closely related rabies virus would be of more concern in North America.

The biology and husbandry chapters will be especially useful in providing readers with basic facts about anatomy and physiology, dietary and housing requirements for different species of exotic pets and wildlife. Some behavioural issues are discussed though there is very limited information about feather-picking behaviour in birds. The chapter on reptile biology and husbandry is particularly well written as there are photos of commonly seen species in practice, anatomical illustrations and good information concerning humane and safe procedures when working with various reptile species. Excellent tables are provided with information about food items for reptiles and graphs that illustrate the UV index vs the distance from the midpoint of the lowest surface of three different lamps are especially well done. However, there is scant information concerning amphibian species and these sections certainly could be expanded. Of special interest is a text box outlining 'The five freedoms' that caregivers should provide for all patients. These are freedom from thirst and hunger, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, freedom to express normal behaviour and freedom from fear and distress. Too often, one or the other of these freedoms is neglected when these animals are held in captivity and it is important to note that an animal deprived of any of these needs will not recover as effectively as one that has its needs met. For instance, the hospital environment can be especially inhospitable for wildlife species unless these patients are provided with a quiet place to recover, with suitable dens, perches or other cage furniture, appropriate food items presented in an appealing manner and efforts to minimise human contact.

An especially interesting discussion about the nursing process is included in this book. It is stated that the nursing process is systematic, dynamic, interpersonal, outcome-focused and universally applicable. Detailed information about different nursing care plans is presented and a very well conceived plan is given for an Amazon parrot with a syringeal aspergilloma. While it may be difficult for many busy practices to institute detailed nursing plans, such as the example that is given here, all of us should strive to achieve the ideal level of care that is presented.

Anaesthesia and analgesia are discussed in a separate chapter. While much of this information is fairly standard and drawn from techniques used in domestic animal species, there is special recognition given to the fact that it is even more difficult to discern pain-related behaviours in exotic pets and wildlife species. Pain is often demonstrated by the lack of normal behaviour, eg inappetance,

but, obviously, a familiarity with normal species behaviour is necessary in order to discern pain in exotic pets and wildlife. The literature on this subject is rapidly increasing and the reader is encouraged to seek out more species-specific information, if available. A text box goes through an example of an analgesic protocol for a three-year old sugar glider undergoing castration. Useful tables of different sedatives and dosages for groups of mammals, birds and reptiles are presented and detailed information for rabbit intubation is also provided. Post-anaesthetic monitoring and care is covered in this chapter and a detailed case study of snake anaesthetic recovery is especially useful. Similarly, a case study of a lame fox goes through the step-by-step considerations in handling, anaesthesia and minimising stress.

Chapters discussing diagnostic imaging, surgical nursing and laboratory techniques cover much standard information but there are particular considerations in exotic pets and wildlife that are discussed. For instance, surgical closure of incisions in reptiles, amphibians and arthropods, dressings used in turtle shell wounds, and bandaging techniques for birds are all addressed. As this publication is primarily aimed at veterinary technicians, the last chapter is titled 'Outpatient care and nurse-led clinics'. An RCVS Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses states that "Veterinary nurses must make animal health and welfare their first consideration when attending to animals" and that they "must keep within their own area of competence and

refer cases responsibly". Nurse-led clinics in the UK provide routine healthcare, advice on nutrition, weight management and behavioural problems and provide follow up consultation for medical and surgical patients. There is information in this chapter about hand-rearing pet rabbits, ferrets and parrots as well as the care of orphaned wild mammals, passerine birds and raptors.

Lastly, this publication includes BSAVA client handout examples ('Introducing a new pet rabbit' and 'Basic training for your parrot') along with common and scientific names for different exotic pets and wildlife species. A useful index is also provided, which will be helpful for quick reference.

In summary, the *BSAVA Manual of Exotic Pet and Wildlife Nursing* is an excellent resource not only for the veterinary nurse (technician) but also for anybody who provides medical care for these species. The book is well written, well organised and full of very useful tables, photographs and illustrations. Animal welfare considerations are stressed and appropriate recommendations are made for addressing these concerns. This publication joins a long list of high quality resources published by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association that are highly recommended not only for the target audience in the UK but for interested parties worldwide.

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