Fish Disease, Diagnosis and Treatment

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BOOK REVIEW . . .

Fish Disease, Diagnosis and Treatment. By E. J. Noga. Iowa State University Press, Ames. 2000. 367 Pages. US$ 99.95.

In 1996 E. J. Noga published this text on fish diseases, and a second printing has been prepared for 2000. There is much to recommend about this book. First, it is extremely well illustrated, both with line drawings and photographs (176 in color). Most of the line drawings appear to be done by the same artists, which make a more attractive format. Photographic plates are well organized, attractive, and informative; illustrating macroscopic and histological changes, and pathogens in wet mount preparations. Indeed, in my opinion, it is probably the best-illustrated text on fish diseases.

Furthermore, of the many texts on fish health, I find this one to be the most complete in scope regarding the hosts—i.e., the author describes the diseases of captive food fishes, ornamental species, and wild fishes in an equitable fashion. Other texts usually are biased towards one type of fish. In other words, rarely do we see fish health texts giving equal play to diseases of ornamental fishes, including marine tropical fishes, as food fishes such as salmonids and catfish. These two attributes in themselves allow me to strongly recommend this text, either as a reference for veterinarians or biologists interested in fish health, or as an academic text for a general course in fish diseases.

The author also includes sections on treatment and necropsy procedures. Again, the latter section is very well illustrated. Within the section on treatment, the author provides an overview of legal issues involved with administration of drugs to food fishes, which is a very useful topic for aquaculturists. The sections on diagnosing diseases are clear, informative and complete. Included are descriptions for collecting tissues, blood, and culture for microorganisms, preservation of tissues for histology. Unlike many texts of this kind, a useful section on biopsy procedures from living fish is provided. A section on normal tissue appearances is also included. This section is a bit brief, but adequate for a text of fish diseases.

As this is the second printing, rather than a new edition, a few topics are out-of-date. Nevertheless, these shortcomings are minor (usually name changes of pathogens), and thus do not merit specific attention here. In fact, considering that the book was written before 1996, it is remarkably current.

Many veterinary texts describe diseases by organ systems rather than by pathogen taxonomy, and such is the case here. It is with the organization of this text that lays the only major fault. The various sections are organized in an order that one might encounter a specific disease/pathological condition during an examination. For example, Chapter 17 is subtitled "Diagnoses made by necropsy of the viscera and examination of wet mounts or histopathology of internal organs." This results in a hodgepodge of otherwise unrelated diseases ranging from prolifertive gill disease (caused by a myxozoan), digenean trematode infections, and neoplasia. Adding to the awkward style is an additional, but uninformative, system of numbering diseases as "problems". Thus, for Chapter 17, we find assigned the problems 55–72. A text such as this would be used as a reference, and thus specific diseases should be readily found. Unfortunately, the layout does not afford this requirement. In addition, the table of contents only lists chapters by numbers and their problem sets (i.e., the most informative descriptive subtitles are omitted).

Although I criticize the organization of this text, it still does not dissuade me from highly recommending it as either a textbook or general reference for researchers and diagnosticians interested in fish diseases.

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