

Veterinary Nursing of Exotic Pets

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Veterinary Nursing of Exotic Pets. By Simon Girling, Blackwell Publishing, 350 Main Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148, USA. 2003, reprinted 2005. ISBN 978-14051-0747-1. 314 pp. US \$76.99 (softcover).

Review by Noble Jackson

Worldwide in the 21st century the public will increasingly own, and seek medical care for, a number of nontraditional, exotic species. These exotic species develop a variety of illnesses requiring medical attention. They also can escape captivity and are frequently brought by the public to animal control facilities, veterinary clinics, or wildlife rehabilitation centers. In England, the author reports the number of dogs and cats kept as pets is on the decline, yet the number of small mammals, reptiles, and birds kept by the public is increasing.

A reference text containing basic knowledge and nursing care for this growing segment of companion pets is essential for the proper care and rehabilitation of these species. In *Veterinary Nursing of Exotic Pets*, the author, Simon Girling, presents a well-written, informative text packed with information related to a variety of exotic species. The goal of this book is to provide veterinarians, veterinary students, and veterinary nursing personnel with up-to-date information on disease conditions, husbandry, medical procedures, and nutritional requirements necessary for the proper care of a number of exotic species. One of the many strong points of this book is the emphasis the author places on anatomical and physiological properties of each species. Knowledge of these properties is critical to proper husbandry, nutrition, and medical management of disease in exotic species. The author presents information on a variety of handling techniques, anesthetics, fluid therapies, medications, and nursing care for commonly seen exotic species. The book is divided into three sections—avian species, reptiles and amphibians, and small mammals.

The avian orders reviewed were Psittaciformes (parrots), Passeriformes (canaries, finches), Anseriformes (ducks and geese), Rhamphastidae (toucan), Stigiformes (owls), and Falconiformes (falcons, hawks, eagles). In the avian chapters the author provides important basic anatomical and physiological information related to many families of the avian species. The emphasis on anatomical and physiological features helps in the understanding of nutritional requirements and disease processes commonly encountered in captive birds. Medical procedures such as proper administration of

injections and placing intravenous or intraosseous catheters to supplement the hydration of injured or ill birds are reviewed. Tables are provided giving the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods of fluid therapy. The author provides an overview of many common avian diseases. The diseases are reviewed based on the anatomical area of injury and include many bacterial, environmental, fungal, nutritional, parasitic, toxic, and viral diseases seen in the captive and wild avian species. The author includes tables with specific therapies for a variety of disease agents and common clinical presentations. The author also provides valuable information on administering and monitoring anesthesia in birds. Instruction is provided on proper handling, housing, and therapeutic procedures essential to caring for these avian species.

The reptilian and amphibian section deals with a very diverse group of vertebrates. Serpentes (snakes), Sauria (lizards), Chelononia (tortoises, turtles, and terrapins), Crocodylia (crocodiles, alligators, caimans, and gharials), and amphibians are featured. The author emphasizes proper husbandry requirements such as adequate lighting, humidity, nutrition, preferred body temperature and vivarium, requirements for many different reptilian and amphibian species. A table is included detailing the recommended feeding frequency and food types of the species reviewed. Disease conditions are reviewed by anatomical location, and tables are provided for treatment of many reptilian and amphibian illnesses. Anesthetic agents, protocols and a table defining stages of anesthesia in reptiles are included in this section. Medical procedures, sex determination, and surgical techniques commonly performed in reptiles and amphibians are reviewed.

The mammalian section highlights the commonly seen small exotic mammalian species. This smaller group of species represents a growing segment of human companions and of exotic animal medicine. The author states that in England the rabbit is the third most common companion animal. The chinchilla, chipmunk, ferret, guinea pig, gerbil, hamster, mouse, rabbit, and rat are reviewed in this section. Providing proper housing and nutrition is essential to maintaining the health of these species. An overview of disease conditions for these mammalian species is provided. Medical, dental, and surgical procedures are described for specific conditions seen in these species. Tables with biological parameters such as normal weight, temperature, respirations, heart rate, gestation length, and life span are provided for these small mammals. Tables of small mammalian diseases and available

therapeutic procedures and medications are included in this section.

This book was written as an aid in the education of veterinary students, nurses, and technicians desiring knowledge in exotic animal medicine. It will serve as an excellent reference for a growing segment of companion animal medicine. It contains up-to-date, usable information related to husbandry and medical procedures for a variety of vertebrate species. Treating and rehabilitating exotic species is becoming a common task for the

veterinarian and wildlife rehabilitator. This text would be a valuable addition to the libraries of veterinary students, veterinarians, wildlife students, and anyone else involved in wildlife rehabilitation.

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