BOOK REVIEWS


The Scientific and Technical Review of the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) publishes volumes every four months on animal diseases of economic and public health consequences. The volume on Emerging Zoonoses and Pathogens of Public Health Concern was published in 2004 and provides an overview of issues related to zoonotic disease issues as well as discussions on specific agents. The volume begins with several general chapters written about different aspects of emerging zoonoses, including their public health significance, determinants of disease emergence, and ecologic sources. These chapters provide good overview and background on emerging disease issues. The chapter on ecological sources of zoonotic disease is particularly interesting as it describes how changes in livestock production practices, land use, and habitat have contributed to the changing face of viral and bacterial pathogens. Unfortunately, this is also the most difficult chapter to follow and could take multiple readings for its contents to be fully comprehended.

None of the chapters are exhaustive in describing specific diseases, but this is not their intent. To provide concise summaries, they are designed to discuss these diseases in terms of their existence as zoonoses. In this regard, the book excels by exploring both obvious and nuanced aspects of many zoonotic agents. For more extensive discussions on these agents, particularly as to how they affect their animal hosts, the reader is referred elsewhere.

One chapter specifically focuses on zoonotic diseases found in wildlife. Although not exhaustive, the discussion in this section is fairly comprehensive, with a good overview of most of the major wildlife diseases that have serious zoonotic potential. This chapter is highly recommended for any student of captive or free-ranging wildlife because it provides concise discussions of diseases such as hantavirus, Nipah virus, West Nile virus, avian influenza, lyme borreliosis, lyssaviruses, brucellosis, and tularemia.

Several chapters have discussions on multiple diseases (i.e., bartonellosis, leptospirosis, borreliosis, and plague). Like the general discussion on wildlife zoonoses, these summaries are specifically tailored to discuss disease zoonosis potential, rather than the manifestations and implications in wildlife populations. These are good, concise references on the human health aspects of these diseases, but detail is lacking compared with other chapters.

A few chapters are devoted to single diseases or disease groups, such as Rift Valley Fever, lyssaviruses, and coronaviruses. These chapters are excellent, providing well-written information with detail on wildlife reservoirs. Other chapters are devoted to tuberculosis, hantavirus, and leishmania. However, these chapters are written in Spanish, with only abstracts in English. The rest of the volume is written in English, with abstracts in Spanish and French.

No text on zoonoses would be complete without discussing avian influenza (AI). Indeed, AI is discussed in several chapters in this volume and is the focus of a section on microbial adaptation and change. The latter chapter, in particular, is an excellent review of the biology, ecology, and politics of AI. However, it also highlights the major limitation of any text that tries to tackle a “hot topic.” At the time of press, in 2004, this information on AI was already out of date, and there have been major developments in regard to AI in the time that has passed since publication. In 2004, relatively few members of the general public were concerned about AI. In 2006, hardly a day goes by that AI is not a topic of discussion on the evening news. Developments with this disease are occurring so rapidly that, by the time this review is published, we could even be experiencing a human flu pandemic . . . or not. Although the study of emerging zoonoses is a rapidly evolving discipline, it does not diminish the value of this text; rather, this volume provides helpful information and perspective on several important diseases, including AI. It provides invaluable background material to help make sense of the daily deluge of information we receive on AI and other emergent diseases.

Some of the chapters are not particularly relevant to the wildlife veterinarian. For example, the section on foodborne zoonoses has some good background information on disease agents such as Salmonella, Escherichia coli, and Toxoplasma gondii but does not discuss wildlife reservoirs in any detail. Other chapters on antimicrobial resistance, food safety, food systems, and trade issues are well written but have limited application in managing captive and free-ranging wildlife.

Overall, this is a very useful volume in providing background information on specific zoonotic agents, as well as perspective on the global and local issues affecting disease emergence. It is imperative that wildlife veterinarians be familiar with many of the issues regarding these zoonoses because they will need this information to protect and manage wildlife populations and to knowledgeably communicate to colleagues and the public.—R. Scott Larsen, D.V.M., Dipl. A.C.Z.M., Wildlife Health Center, One Shields Avenue, University of California, Davis, California 95616, USA.


Now completely revised, the definitive book of Dr. Mader’s Reptile Medicine and Surgery has been expanded by more than 700 pages, reflecting the fast-growing knowledge in herpetology and the veterinary perspective. The book follows its traditional layout with eight sections. Because a major portion of reptile medicine is dealt-