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David E. Green

This is a colorful, thoroughly illustrated and diverse introduction to the diseases, surgery, clinical pathology, parasitology, and radiography of reptiles and amphibians. More than 90% of the 232 cases (or “Questions” as each case is called by the author) are reptiles, and these are fairly well balanced among chelonians, snakes, and lizards (predominantly iguanas). The variety of images that accompany the introduction to each case is excellent, and might include a photograph of a live animal, a radiograph, a blood smear, a fecal smear, specimens from a necropsy, photomicrographs, and infrequently, differential blood count and serum chemistries. Often, each case has two or more images, and can include two or more animals. Questions are then posed about the gross photographs (or other images), but the posed questions are not simply, “What’s the disease?”, but also concern treatments, pathogenesis, status of an organism as a pathogen or not, amenability to surgery, risks to remaining animals, etc. Additional images in the answers to many cases are often helpful, definitive, and of high quality.

The range of cases is broad, but because only 7% of cases are amphibians, this is predominantly a text on reptiles. There are five cases involving the Order Crocodylia, but there are no tuatars, caecilians, or larval amphibians. About 35 cases are blood smears, fecal smears, or skin scrapings, which should appeal to clinicians and clinical pathologists, but many of these cytological images ask merely the identity of the cell, the parasite, or the parasitic egg (or oocyst). The cytological images are consistently of high quality, but it might be frustrating to some readers that the host animal from which the blood cells or parasites originated is often not identified. Mere identification of disease-free animals or their sex constitutes >40% of the amphibian cases and several reptile cases.

In the Preface, the author repeats his purposes from the first edition as being to teach and train students and young veterinarians by presenting diverse images, and then to pose questions that go far beyond a diagnosis, but also to emphasize treatments, prognosis, etiology, prevention, or impact on a colony. Nearly all reptiles and amphibians in this text are captive animals; readers seeking information on diseases of free-ranging reptiles and amphibians will be disappointed with this book. The “answers” for many cases often have a half page of text and additional images, and some answers are longer than a page. However, answers for many cases involving blood smears, parasitology, or identity of the animal, tend to be very brief, often a single line, with no delving into prognosis, treatment, prevention, or impact on a colony. A chance for the author to share experiences, common diseases, treatments, prognoses, etc., clearly was lost in the “identify” cases.

In this 2nd edition, the author notes that several cases have been contributed by other