

EQUINE MEDICINE AND SURGERY - VOLUME 1 & 2

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The fourth edition of *Equine Medicine and Surgery*, published as 2 hard-back volumes, is a multi-author text which endeavours to present the practising veterinarian with information that may improve his service to clients. According to the editors, the book has been "organized ... to follow closely ... steps that the veterinarian follows in making a diagnosis".

The first section of the book deals with "logical approaches to the most common problems as perceived ... by the veterinarian's office", the second section describes the diagnostic and therapeutic approach by the veterinarian and the last section (the major portion of the book) is devoted to individual organ systems. Diseases of multiple body systems and of the cardiovascular, respiratory, alimentary, nervous, reproductive, ocular, musculoskeletal, urinary, endocrine and haemolymphatic systems as well as of the skin are included. The discussion of each of these systems is started with a presentation of specialised diagnostic aids, particular ancillary aids, principles of pathophysiology and methods of therapy of relevance to the particular organ system. The diseases that affect the organ system are then presented and some are discussed under one or more of the following subheadings: epizootiology, lesions and aetiology, clinical signs, diagnosis and treatment. Each chapter is concluded with an extensive list of references, for example, 778 on *Diseases of the alimentary system*.

If it was the intention of the editors to publish a book which would focus on problem-solving, I doubt whether they have succeeded. To start off with, the title of the first chapter *Diagnostic approaches to common presenting complaints* is misleading insofar as this chapter merely lists some 35 complaints/problems/syndromes and then elaborates on these without a genuine attempt to introduce a diagnostic approach. The introductory paragraphs to this chapter, however, state that this chapter presents "a series of short discussions to assist the veterinarian in the planning process". In my opinion the editors have lost a golden opportunity to introduce a problem-solving approach. The list of "common presenting problems" should be expanded to include more clinical signs/syndromes such as jaundice, pale mucous membranes, polydipsia, polyphagia, chronic diarrhoea etc. This section should then also include basic guidelines to a practical approach to the listed problems.

The title of the second chapter, *Principles of patient evaluation and diagnosis*, I find equally misleading - especially with the inclusion of sections such as "the pathophysiology of anaesthesia", a detailed discussion of the different anaesthetic agents and the necropsy procedure. South Africans may find it odd that peripheral blood smear examination is not even mentioned as a diagnostic aid.

As with most multi-author texts, the book has its strengths and its weaknesses. The text on endocrine system disorders is incomplete. Hyperparathyroidism, for example, is not even mentioned. Conditions of local importance, like equine piroplasmiasis, are often treated very superficially. Orbivirus infections like Encephalosis are not even mentioned in the text. In my opinion a book of this nature would have international appeal and an inclusion of detailed discussions on diseases exotic to the countries of the authors would certainly be appropriate.

In any book, indexing is of vital importance. I battled to find information on "osteodystrophia fibrosa/nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism/calcium-phosphorous imbalance" - only to eventually find something on the subject under the listing: "nutrition - bone disorders". The words "calcium", "parathyroid hormone" and "phosphorus" also do not appear in the index. This is but one example. A more extensive and complete index list is something that should be seriously considered in future revisions of the book.

Equine Medicine and Surgery, however remains a valuable source of information for equine practitioners, general practitioners and students. If it does not contain what you were hoping to find in it, it is likely to provide you with one or more references. I have no hesitation in strongly recommending it to everybody with an interest in the health and handling of horses.

J van Heerden