

Book Reviews

The Equine Hospital Manual

Edited by K Corley and J Stephen (2008). Published by Wiley-Blackwell, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO22 9SA, UK. 752 pp Hardback (ISBN 978-1-40-513016-5). Price £69.99.

This recently-published text fills a niche in the plethora of literature in equine veterinary medicine by providing a comprehensive source of reference of the procedures commonly performed on hospitalised horses. Contributions are made from a variety of authors with experience in this field. The usefulness of this book is not, however, confined to use within the hospital, since many of the techniques and procedures are equally useful in the field.

The opening section comprises diagnostic techniques and sample collection techniques for use in adult horses, written by a variety of authors. This will be a treasure trove for all hospital interns and greatly reassuring to the graduate in ambulatory practice who finds him or herself on-call and faced with an unfamiliar situation demanding technical expertise. Much of it is also relevant to the veterinary student when researching a new technique before attempting it in practice. The techniques are clearly described and illustrated with monochrome photographs and artistic drawings by Stephen Callaghan. A comprehensive range of diagnostic and treatment procedures is seen, including for medical, orthopaedic and intensive care tasks. There follows a section concentrating on neonatal foals, which always present additional challenges. As anyone experienced with neonatology can attest, one can never have too many 'tricks up your sleeve' in this most demanding discipline. The pictures and diagrams accompanying the text are most helpful despite some of the foals' resemblance to camelids in the more artistic interpretations.

A chapter on hospital design then follows which will be highly appetising food for thought for any practitioner thinking of blowing the savings on an equine hospital, and hopefully will help to avoid some pitfalls made by their predecessors. This section includes parts on hospital safety and biosecurity which cannot be overlooked in the modern age. The chapter on anaesthesia is full of useful tables comparing different agents and techniques and offers highly accessible information to summarise the text. The section on nutritional management is particularly useful, since this vital subject is often not given its due attention by equine clinicians working in haste and included are suggested feeding regimens for horses of different ages with comparisons on the relative virtues of enteral and parenteral feeding in sick patients.

The next major section describes commonly-performed hospital treatments, which includes advice on sedative regimens, analgesic usage, antimicrobials and other frequently-used equine drug groups. The subsequent chapter discusses problems encountered in the hospitalised horse. This is a most useful review of all of the problems encountered eventually in a busy hospital, and

goes on to consider the management of the coagulation and cardiovascular systems. The first editor authors the crucial area of management and prevention of shock with comprehensive descriptions of all of the currently-available treatment modalities.

The final sections describe investigative techniques and treatments of the respiratory, gastrointestinal, neurological, musculoskeletal and ocular systems, by summarising the commonly-encountered diseases and investigative and treatment procedures relevant to each section, each of which could fill a book in itself. Book-ending these chapters is an appendix which provides instant reference of commonly-used equine drug doses and normal laboratory ranges.

This is an original book by virtue of its layout from the approach of the hospital clinician faced with a problem and, as such, the layout and organisation is very refreshing. There is a wealth of useful data contained within and it differs from many traditional texts organised by body system, in that it concentrates on the technical aspects of diagnosis and treatments. It would be extremely useful to any veterinarian still perfecting their craft in a hospital and also to update those of great experience, to improve the prognosis and welfare of any hospitalised horse. Despite its focus on the hospitalised patient, the clinician in ambulatory practice has much to learn from this book. The photographs enhance the content and although the drawings are not as sharp as in some texts, they serve to illustrate the techniques described very well.

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Easeful Death: Is There a Case for Assisted Dying?

M Warnock and E Macdonald (2008). Published by Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK. 176 pp Paperback (ISBN 978-0-19-956184-1). Price £7.99.

Euthanasia in humans, unlike euthanasia in animals, has traditionally been regarded as morally unacceptable. But that may be changing, and indeed may need to change, it is argued by the authors of this lucid and informative book; a distinguished philosopher and an experienced cancer doctor. Noting a number of recent attempts in the UK Parliament to legalise assisted death for those who request it, and explaining how this has already been legalised in some other countries, they offer a clear, comprehensive, and mostly well-balanced account of the ethical arguments for and against, and of the practical implications of such a change in the law.

The ethical debate about assisted dying, the authors suggest, is often seen as a conflict between the principle of the sanctity of human life and the principle of respect for the autonomy of the individual. More relevant to the debate than autonomy, however, they argue, is the motive of compassion; and the idea that human life is sacred "may be