

Book Reviews

The Working Equid Veterinary Manual

The Brooke (2013). Published by Whittet Books, 1 St John's Lane, Stansted, Essex CM24 8JU, UK. 528 pages Paperback (ISBN 978-873580-87-5). Price £55.00.

The Working Equid Veterinary Manual is an engaging and refreshing read for anyone connected with working equids. It is substantial, consisting of 528 pages that have evolved and been refined by inputs from a global veterinary community.

There are currently several good contemporary texts on general equine medicine available, for example, *The Manual of Equine Practice* by Rose and Hodgson or *The Equine Manual* by Higgins and Snyder. These are indispensable references for many equine practitioners, ostensibly in Europe or North America. There are also other books available about veterinary issues that focus on, or include, donkeys and mules such as, *The Professional Handbook of the Donkey* by the Donkey Sanctuary and *Horse Health Care* by Hadrill. In addition, and relatively more recently, *Veterinary Treatment for Working Equines* by Duncanson has set out to cover all working equids.

The Working Equid Veterinary Manual expands on this heritage, and fills a gap, by offering an up-to-date, comprehensive text that is aimed specifically at, and developed by, professionals involved in the veterinary care of working equids, mainly in Asia and Africa. There are specific socio-economic, technical and health challenges associated with promoting and maintaining an adequate level of welfare in working equines in these so-called developing countries. Most conventional, equine texts focus on equine populations in the industrialised world. However, the levels of technology and service provision advocated here are not usually deliverable or appropriate for working equines in developing countries. Also, the veterinary needs of horses or donkeys kept as 'pets', for leisure activities and sport are radically different from those used for transport or draught purposes in extreme conditions, even though their welfare needs are the same. Veterinarians need additional skills that enable them to work effectively in this complex context. This manual advocates a holistic approach, focusing on optimising welfare at every stage and attempts to address the severe shortage of quality, evidence-based information available to support veterinarians supporting the majority of the world's equids which are in this 'working equid' group.

For these working equids, much of our knowledge of advanced diagnostics or treatments is not relevant, as the associated technology and materials are simply not affordable. The time-honoured skills of understanding animals and people are needed. These can be further developed alongside good basic clinical approaches, using the growing knowledge from social science on influencing human behaviour change. This manual, more than any other currently available, can help veterinarians equip themselves with knowledge and skills required in this terrain. It is ground-breaking in integrating an extensive and practical consideration for welfare

throughout. This is presented as a routine part of the veterinary role and in doing so reinforces the role and expectation that veterinary professionals are advocates for animals; that protecting their welfare is not only the right thing to do, but it makes sense in terms of controlling disease and ensuring a productive animal for their owners. Importantly, the book combines social development along with, and not as a substitute for, good quality, appropriate medical care to improve equid welfare. This is something that can be neglected by development organisations who fail to grasp the major constraint that disease, injury and poor management has on working equids, even more so than other animals kept in the same communities. Along with this challenge there are opportunities available to ameliorate this long term by supporting the development of practical, affordable systems of supporting healthcare in the communities.

The book itself is divided into 18 chapters which are colour indexed for easy reference. The first section covers clinical examination and making a diagnosis. This, along with the subsequent chapters, is well-illustrated, clear and easy to read. Box sections are included for emphasis, and easy location, of the main points on the page. Considering the importance of zoonotic disease, these are wisely included in the early sections of the book.

The next chapter brings animal welfare, behaviour and handling into the mainstream, using the five freedoms' framework to illustrate what good welfare looks like.

Veterinarians everywhere are frequently faced with the challenges of providing adequate peri-operative analgesia or general pain relief. These challenges are even greater where resources are limited and current understanding in this field has yet to be incorporated in mainstream veterinary practice. Pain assessment and relief are key to improving welfare in many situations and so a specific chapter has been devoted to this topic. There have been significant developments in assessing pain in the veterinary field and this chapter is underpinned by research findings and increases awareness of veterinary responsibility in this area. In addition, medical products for equids that were considered too expensive for low economic countries ten years or more ago are now affordable. For example, analgesic drugs such as flunixin and phenylbutazone are now realistic options and the clear guidance on their effective use is very important.

There is a whole chapter on euthanasia, reflecting the still common situation where working equids are not humanely killed at the end of their working lives, but either abandoned, or allowed to suffer before they die. Chapters throughout the manual frequently advocate euthanasia as a realistic option for conditions where there is no viable treatment, and inaction or ineffective treatment, is advised against. A change in attitude for veterinarians to advocate for euthanasia, and a viable means to deliver this, can potentially reduce the suffering of millions of equids. This can also save the owners the often harrowing process of

watching a faithful animal, which has done much to support their family, suffer in its final days, or weeks, of life.

The chapter on dentistry brings this topic up-to-date in the context of working equids. Equine dentistry in Europe and North America has developed significantly these past two decades. This, though, is beyond the economic means of most working equid owners, as even basic routine treatment advocated in current dental textbooks, are often dependent on expensive motorised equipment being available. Hence, the chapter focuses on areas where examination, and the use of manual equipment, can be used under local conditions to achieve good results.

Case studies found throughout the book bring context and help define the style of this text as firmly rooted in practical applications. These case studies, along with examples in the main text illustrating context, are very informative for those not familiar with the conditions that many working equids are exposed to. For example, working equids in many parts of the world are frequently subjected to malpractices mentioned in the text, such as nose slitting, use of setons or firing. These are undertaken usually due to a lack of understanding, or access to alternatives, which this manual is there to promote and thereby address the suffering associated with malpractices.

Those new to treating equids will find the chapter on clinical techniques particularly useful. In many countries where working equids predominate, undergraduate training offers few opportunities to learn basic practical techniques. This book clearly sets out good practice, illustrated by diagrams. Along with the chapter on understanding behaviour this would, if the advice offered is followed, go a long way to helping reduce the harsh handling that equids are frequently subjected to, when they are examined and treated.

A comprehensive range of relevant clinical conditions are discussed in this book. The chapters are divided according to the main body systems: gastrointestinal, respiratory system, urinary and reproductive systems, musculoskeletal integument and neurological. They focus on common conditions, in a clear style which puts across the salient points in diagnosis, treatment and optimising welfare from a practical perspective.

Other chapters cover diseases of foals and parasitology. Again, they give clear, direct information on these conditions, addressing the frequently seen problems of mistreatment.

The book is well-referenced, guiding the reader to up-to-date and relevant information relevant to working equines, and so it will be a good starting point, particularly for students, to investigate the areas in more detail.

In conclusion, this book is one of the most comprehensive and practical resources for veterinary care and improving the welfare for working equids. It is an important book, and therefore highly recommended, for all veterinarians, and associated professionals that are involved with delivering healthcare services for working equids.

Moreover, this book is relevant to veterinarians not directly involved with working equids. Animal welfare is a global social issue, and this book provides veterinarians and others with valuable insight into the realities of conditions still

experienced by working equids, so that they can better support initiatives that promote change.

Now that this book has been printed, widely distributed and aided with an online version that can be updated, the content and style will no doubt grow and flourish further. Veterinarians will be equipped and inspired to deal with a variety of conditions encountered, and innovation and shared ideas will lead to improved practice and better welfare outcome for these equids.

Achieving primary healthcare for working equids and other animals in poorer parts of the world is a global challenge. There are potential, sustainable 'win-win' situations for both human and animal welfare around the world if the right support is given to empower local professionals with viable, evidence-based treatment options and constructive approaches and attitudes towards animals, and awareness and capacities to respond to the needs of communities. This manual can play a very important role in this, and the 'Team Brooke' should be applauded for making this available to the veterinarians of the world.

References

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An Introduction to Animal Behaviour, Sixth Edition

A Manning and MS Dawkins (2012). Published by Cambridge University Press, University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, UK. 458 pages Paperback (ISBN 978-0-521-16514-3). Price £35.00.

This sixth edition of this well-known book, cherished by most aspirants to the study of animal behaviour, is absolutely packed full of descriptions and illustrations of how animals behave, discussions about our understanding of why they behave as they do and accounts of the science that has yielded this information.

On receiving this book, which is pretty substantial (458 pages), I performed the classic flick through, scrolling across pages and stopping randomly to get a feel for the contents. There is so much material contained within this book that it clearly needed more than a random rummage about amongst the pages to do it justice. However, this initial foray was very pleasing because, unlike in many textbooks, I wasn't faced with page after page of tightly packed black and white typeface but with lots of tantalising full and half-page illustra-