Feline medicine

Consultations in Feline Internal Medicine
J. R. August. 610 pages, hardback, £47.00. London, W. B. Saunders. 1991.

IT has given me great pleasure to review this book as it provides a very readable and informative text on many aspects of feline medicine. The format has been subdivided into sections, with individual editors for each section, and with contributions on each topic from several recognised experts. The overall approach is one of ‘problem-solving’, which makes the information readily accessible for the veterinary surgeon in practice.

John August has identified areas of specific interest in the cat – a delight for those readers who normally have to wade through a plethora of canine information before alighting on an afterthought relevant to the feline – and expanded upon these in an illuminating and challenging manner.

The initial section of the book provides a good introduction into the physiology and psychology of the cat – vital for the feline enthusiast – and discusses problems such as mortality of kittens in cattery situations and pyrexia of unknown origin. The use of enteral supplementation for anorexic cats, a technique often underused in the management of such cases, is also covered in a practical way.

The dermatology section is thorough and very readable. The text is orientated to the US market and so there is a relative overemphasis on the mycoses and mycobacteria. However, this may help draw the attention of the UK practitioner to an agent such as cryptococcus as a rare differential diagnosis in the odd case. Chapters on paw and pad disorders, dermatophytosis, cheyletiellosis, atopy, mast cell tumours, eosinophilic granuloma ‘confusion’, and genetic defects are comprehensive and well presented. The topic of food hypersensitivity in the cat often causes debate. In this text a three day fast is suggested as a means of ‘test diet’ – many dermatologists would prefer a six to eight week trial period with an elimination diet. The debate continues!

The section on cardiac and respiratory disorders is very useful. The chapter on the interaction with systemic disease provides plenty of ‘food for thought’ diagnostically. Coughing cats, sneezing cats, and cardiac abnormalities in kittens and adults, are all dealt with extremely well. Endocrine and metabolic disorders are tackled in a very practical way, for instance, in detailing the management of post thyroidectomy hypocalcaemia. The management of the feline diabetic, with all the anomalies peculiar to the cat in this situation, is also well covered. The discussion on therapeutics is excellent, particularly with regard to the use of megestrol acetate. Again, unfortunately because the text is primarily for the US market, the drug trade names are unfamiliar, but the generic is always listed alongside so this does not prove a problem.

The book continues with an in-depth look at feline urinary disease. Perhaps the subject of clinical problems with hypertension will be an unfamiliar concept to many veterinary surgeons but it is dealt with in a practical and informative way. The chapter on perineal urethrostomy might benefit from some diagrams of surgical approach, although this is probably outside the scope of the book, and the authors stress, rightly, that the procedure should only be carried out if no reasonable alternative exists.

The section on haemopoetic disorders is excellent and a great aid to those unfamiliar with feline haematology. The chapter on the use of tests for autoimmune disease is concise, sensible and up-to-date. A diagnostic approach to lymph node disorders and a practical approach to blood transfusions are also included in this section.

Equally enlightening is the chapter on gastrointestinal disease, tackling all the problems so frequently encountered such as gingivitis/stomatitis, diarrhoea in young cats/kittens and chronic vomiting. Inflammatory bowel disease, gastrointestinal lymphosarcoma, gastrointestinal parasites and hepatic lipidosis, sensibly, occupy chapters in their own right. The chapter on constipation, obstipation and megacolon may provide some inspiration for weary practitioners managing this type of case.

No text on feline medicine could be complete without a section on feline neurology and this book has a refreshing and practical approach to the common neurological problems encountered. Compulsory reading!

Last, but not least, the book covers infectious diseases as separate entities. The approach is to discuss relevant areas such as the interpretation of coronavirus serology and feline leukaemia virus tests, immune response to FIV infection, control of upper respiratory tract disease in multicat households, and currently available antibacterial and antiviral therapy.

This book is extremely good value, retailing at £47.00 in hardback. The black and white prints and diagrams are very clear and it does not suffer
Diagnostic ultrasonography

Diagnostic Ultrasound in the Dog and Cat
F. Barr. Published by Blackwell Scientific, Oxford. Price £27.50. Paperback. 193 pages. 1990

THIS is the book we have all been waiting for! The use of real time grey scale B-mode diagnostic ultrasonography has been mushrooming in veterinary practice and the results of the technology have been in danger of misinterpretation by users who are not fully conversant with the methodology of ultrasound imaging. Thus there exists a need for a primer on the use of diagnostic ultrasound in examining our domestic animals.

The publication is in softback form, reasonably priced and written for practitioners as well as researchers. The approach is realistic, starting with basic principles of ultrasound and then covering the organs and structures which can be successfully imaged in the various body cavities and other regions. The format is a comprehensive text illustrated with ultrasound scan images matched with black and white line drawings of the scan fields.

The chapter on principles of diagnostic ultrasound is not as daunting as it sounds as the elementary physics and production of the scan images are dealt with in a clear but agreeably simple fashion so that the reader does not feel inhibited in getting to grips with the technology. The descriptions of the type and range of equipment available for use is excellent information for the new entrant into the ultrasound stakes and I found the section on image interpretation and common artefacts to be sufficiently extensive to give a good grounding for the aspirant imager. Much disinformation can be generated by a failure to appreciate the inherent artefactual illusions which are part of ultrasonographic imaging.

The first organs to be dealt with are those of liver and spleen, building on images of the normal to methodically explore the scope of the technology to investigate pathological changes and conditions. This section is extensive with illustrative coverage of the conditions discussed. Each chapter concludes with a useful list of advised further reading. The urinary tract is considered in the succeeding chapter in a similar manner and again the information presented is impressive. Imaging of the reproductive tract is the next section to be presented but here the breadth of information imparted is perhaps not quite as wide as in the previous chapters.

There are areas of description in the text which are not illustrated by ultrasonographs but the coverage is sufficient to introduce the reader to the use of this type of imaging in reproductive problems. The relative lack of imaging detail is not so much the fault of the author but is due more to the fact that the scope of this area of scanning in the veterinary field has still a considerable way to go as it is dependent on the quality of the ultrasound scanning equipment realistically available to the veterinary ultrasonographer.

The following chapter on imaging other abdominal structures is a round-up of information on a number of organs and pathological conditions encompassing adrenals, pancreas and gastrointestinal tract.

Chapter 6 enters a different field of ultrasound scanning, namely echocardiology and imaging of the heart. This is a whole new ball game involving dynamic structures with a more critical evaluation of dimensions and range of movement, presenting a more difficult task in explaining images of mobile structures using only the written word and fixed printed images. I found the approach in this section a well planned attempt to advise on interpretation of the planes of scanning of the internal architecture of the heart. I doubt if a word picture can ever be sufficient to explain this dynamic subject but certainly the text produced in the book would enable the potential echocardiologist to attempt to get to grips with the technique. After scanning for a while in an exploratory fashion, the text and illustrations will become clearer to the reader. The chapter is extensive and gives wide coverage of the common cardiac anomalies encountered in the smaller species. The use of M-mode is dealt with where it is relevant for assisting in diagnosis of pathological conditions but there is no attempt to illustrate the use of Doppler techniques for further diagnosis of cardiovascular lesions.

The limited remaining applications for scanning in the thoracic cavity are described in the succeeding chapter involving intrathoracic masses and lesions of the diaphragm.

The section on the use of ultrasonography as it applies to the eye and its immediate surroundings will be of interest to the clinician who is exploring methods of expanding the range of use of the equipment into other areas as will be the following chapter on imaging other superficial soft tissue structures. Imaging such structures requires a high frequency transducer and imaging quality of a high standard to give reasonable diagnostic ability but with ever advancing
standards in scanner technology, these areas will become of increasing importance in the veterinary field. The final chapter on biopsy techniques is innovative and gives an excellent insight into what will become a routine clinical investigatory procedure of the future.

The text of the book is written in a clear and understandable manner and the style makes it most readable. Meticulous is a word which occurs regularly in the text and is the word which could be used to describe the care and attention which has gone into the production of this book. Whereas the written word is of high quality unfortunately the illustrations on occasions do not do justice to the text. Reproduction of ultrasound scan images present a challenge to the illustrator and the originals have to be of the highest quality. In a number of cases the quality has slipped but one can sympathise with the author as, due to the relatively low volume of veterinary cases scanned, it is necessary to compromise by using images of lesser quality rather than fail to produce any illustration at all. The accompanying line drawings are helpful in interpretation of the scan images but I feel that a more topographical approach could have benefited the reader. An outline of the entire animal with a reference box to the scan area might have helped the less experienced to orientate and the use of either photographs or outline drawings of entire organs or topographical areas could offer additional reassurance in interpretation. I felt that this would have been of particular value in the section dealing with echocardiology where it was difficult to relate the exact details of the small scan area to the overall structure of the heart.

I said it was the book we have been waiting for and I think it has been worth the wait. The book is a must for anybody contemplating using real time diagnostic ultrasound in small animals and will become a standard text among veterinary ultrasonographers. I can envisage the occasion when, on viewing an ultrasound scan image, the deriding cynic starts talking of the similarity to a view from an aircraft window on a bad night landing at Glasgow airport, the hand will reach for that book by Barr to prove a point.

J. BOYD

ABSTRACTS

A syndrome resembling feline dysautonomia (Key-Gaskell syndrome) in a dog

A ONE-year-old spayed labrador retriever had a three week history of intermittent lethargy and diarrhoea. Clinical findings included urinary and faecal incontinence, loss of anal sphincter tone, bilateral membrana nictitans protrusion, markedly dilated pupils, bilateral keratitis sicca, dry mucous membranes and a crusty nose. The direct and indirect pupillary light responses were poor. Cervical hyperaesthesia was present. Autonomic nervous system function was found to be abnormal on the basis of response to atropine; intradermal histamine and gastric motility studies. Treatment with metoclopramide hydrochloride and bethanechol chloride resulted in improvement in attitude and appetite, an improved Schirma tear test and less frequent vomiting within 24 hours. Bladder function and anal tone improved over a three week period. However, although improving, euthanasia was performed after one month at the owner's request. No post mortem examination was performed.

WISE, L. A. & LAPPIN, M. R. (1991) Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 199, 2103-2106

Demographic data and treatment of small companion animals with lead poisoning: 347 cases (1977 to 1986)

THREE hundred animals were successfully treated with calcium EDTA; 16 died and 10 were euthanased. Of the 25 dogs treated with penicillamine, those with blood lead levels greater than 100 μg/dl usually required two courses of treatment. Twenty-one animals were not treated. Paint was incriminated as the source of lead in 29 per cent of cases. Other sources included linoleum, plumbing solder and window calking. In five birds the source of lead was tile grout, stained glass and a chess set. Gastrointestinal metallic foreign bodies were removed from two birds and six dogs. Most animals with particular radio-opaque material in the gastrointestinal tract were given cathartics or enemas before chelation began. Birds were most likely to die from lead poisoning. Most animals came from the greater Boston area; 74 per cent of cases coming from four specific neighbourhoods. There was a positive correlation between the presence of lead in animals and the number of people living in poverty.

MORGAN, R. V., PEARCE, L. K., MOORE, F. M. & ROSSI, T. (1991) Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 199, 98-102