Cytokines in Veterinary Medicine, edited by VECJ Schijns & MC Horznik, CAB International, UK, 1997, 324 pages, price: £50.00, ISBN 0 85199 209 9

Cytokines (lymphokines, interleukins) are a group of regulatory proteins which affect regulation of the immune system, pregnancy, haemopoiesis, tissue implantation and repair. Cytokine biology is linked to the most rapidly developing areas in veterinary immunobiology, made possible by advances in polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology to identify cytokine genes, recombinant DNA technology to clone and express cytokines, and spurred by promises of pharmaceutical products and profits. The applications of cytokines are seen as enhancing immunity and recovery in disease or compromised animals, vaccine additives to augment or induce desire immune responses, or as diagnostic reagents to monitor disease status or identify protective responses.

The aim of this multi-authored volume is simply to provide state-of-the-art information (1996-7) on cytokine biology in veterinary species (horses, ruminants, pigs, dogs, cats and chickens). While the storing of genes, recombinant protein expression and development of assays are most advanced for ruminants (section 1) and pigs, most remaining chapters document detection of cytokine genes +/- cloning and limited detection of cytokine mRNA. Potential applications for future advances are well publicised, but actual data exist only for ruminants and pigs (for instance treatment of viral infections and augmenting resistance to infection). For those familiar with the literature of cytokine applications in vivo, few new applications have appeared in the last 3 to 5 years, most likely due to cost of treatments and side-effects.

The strength of this volume is to provide current comparative data for veterinary researchers in the one book. However, it is a book for researchers and lecturers, with applications being too preliminary for practitioners. The language of the chapters is scientifically directed. The extensive reference list covers to 1996-7, and the rapidly with which such texts are ‘outmoded’ by developments in the field is familiar to researchers and computer owners alike.

In conclusion, the book is an informative reference text for researchers, but will be quickly dated in such a rapidly developing field. However, I have not seen a similar comprehensive book covering this area of veterinary immunobiology.

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Infectious Diseases of the Dog and Cat, 2nd edn, edited by CE Greene, WB Saunders Company, Division of Harcourt Brace & Company, New South Wales, 1998, 934 pages, ISBN 07216 2707 4

The book is divided into five sections and a very useful appendix. The first four sections cover viral, bacterial, fungal and protozoal diseases. The fifth deals with clinical problems and approaches the investigation of infectious diseases based on body systems. The list of topics includes both common and ingrequently reported infectious diseases.

Most of the chapters are authored by a different veterinarian and the book’s author list is a veritable ‘who’s who’ of experts in the field of small animal infectious disease. The editor, Professor Greene authors several chapters and this reflects his outstanding career and contribution to the field of canine and feline infectious diseases. Acknowledged experts write many of the book’s chapters. For example chapter 3 is co-written by Professor Max Appel, an expert in the field of canine distemper virus.

I found this book outstanding. The chapters are well written and cover both clinical aspects and the pathophysiology of infectious disease. The attention paid to commonly used microbiological and clinical diagnostic techniques makes it a suitable textbook for use in teaching internal medicine and microbiology. Recent landmark papers are referenced and the material is as up to date as a textbook can be. Having read the first edition of the book, I found the 2nd edition very ‘new’. For example the chapter on feline coronavirus disease has been completely revamped. It now takes into account insights that have been gained by the use of molecular biology techniques such as PCR and DNA sequence analysis. The book also includes many new chapters on emerging diseases, for example ‘cat scratch fever’ and its causative agent Bartonella henselae. Close to home, equine morbillivirus infection in cats is reviewed. Most other chapters are similarly new or updated with references as recent as 1997. Older references used in the first edition of the book have not been included in each chapter’s reference list. The authors get around this problem by simply referring the reader to the first edition. This seems a small price to pay for such a wonderfully comprehensive text.

I particularly liked the generous use of photos, diagrams and clinical algorithms. They make the book very readable. It could be used in the clinic to quickly check for information, or as a comprehensive summary of knowledge on a particular disease. The appendices are excellent and include immunisation recommendations, sample collection for diagnostic specimens and an excellent antimicrobial formulary.

Infectious diseases of the dog and cat is sure to become required reading for those venturing into ACVSc Membership and Fellowship examinations in the various small animal chapters. However, the text has something for all dog and cat practitioners and for veterinary students studying veterinary microbiology. I would highly recommend this book to the practice library. It is a beauty!

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Atlas of Equine Ultrasonography, JM Reimer, Mosby Year Book Inc, St Louis, Australian Agents: PO Box 431 Artarmon NSW, 1998, 308 pages Price $165. ISBN 0 8151 2146 6

This book is an atlas of images. It shares the sonographical case experiences of busy equine private practices. The 852 images are organised by body systems with an emphasis on abnormalities. The written information is by no means intended to be comprehensive. It is brief and mainly in the form of case details given in the figure legends.

Over one third of the images are of the musculoskeletal system. The remainder deal the thorax, heart, abdomen, the female reproductive system and the scrotum. A key for orientation and labelling is provided at the beginning of the musculoskeletal system, however, a practitioner inexperienced in sonography will have trouble determining the location, orientation and labelling of the transducer for each image throughout the book.

The images appear to have been collected over seven years of practice, utilising sonographic equipment that is currently in use and readily available in Australia. This atlas would not suit a beginner wishing to learn the techniques of sonography, rather it would complement other detailed texts in the library of an equine or mixed practice veterinarian by providing a volume of images to increase the exposure of the practitioner to sonographical material. This is a book to browse through a number of times and therefore may be excellent addition for the practice coffee table.

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Dr Hoffmann is a sonologist for the University of Sydney and private practices. She is the current president of the Australasian Association of Diagnostic Imaging (AADI).