BOOK REVIEW

The Veterinary Formulary – Fifth Edition
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This is the fifth edition of The Veterinary Formulary, having been first published in 1991, and the third consecutive edition that has been published jointly by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the British Veterinary Association (BVA). At a time when there is much debate into the dispensing and prescribing of medicines in the veterinary field, past volumes have been essential reading for those involved in these aspects of veterinary life. The present edition has undergone quite extensive revision by an impressive list of 57 expert contributors. These changes include the general text but also involve dosages and many drug preparations. Newly included in this edition are the BVA Guidelines on Prudent Use of Microbiologicals (including species-specific advice) and a revised BVA Code of Practice on Medicines. These are, quite correctly, given prominence by being placed at the front of the book.

Following these sections, there are a number of chapters giving concise guidance on prescribing for specific species. The more mainstream species for veterinary treatment (equines, ruminants, pigs, dogs and cats) have 12 pages in total devoted to them. There then follows information on other species of animals, including one section of 13 pages for birds (poultry, gamebirds, pigeons and ostriches) and another of seven pages for exotic birds (passerines, psittacines and raptors). Others contain information on laboratory animals, rabbits, rodents, ferrets, fish, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles. All these sections show the necessity for readily available information on the more exotic species that continue to grow in popularity. Difficulties in general practice can arise when one is presented with a species that is unfamiliar, and the process of obtaining accurate information on medicine dosage rates was very difficult until the arrival of the Veterinary Formulary. While by their nature these notes must be brief, and indeed some of the text is indeed so, the essential points are well written almost without exception. Occasional reference is made in the text to medicines without any further dosage details, e.g. levothyroxine use in pigeons. In the gamebird section, Fenbendazole is recorded as having a marketing authority for partridges, pheasants and grouse, whereas the specific drug listing correctly only indicates grouse.

Near the end of these chapters, there are sections on areas of general veterinary therapeutics where there are more specific difficulties, e.g. where there is renal or hepatic impairment, or in the younger or older groups of patients, emphasizing the contraindications that often exist in usage of medicines for these groups of animals. A new section on basic wound management is also included.

Further information specific to avians is given for vaccines and their administration, and this can be found in the specific section on immunological preparations for birds. This section gives brief information on vaccination techniques for all methods of administration.

The remainder of the book is uniquely devoted to lists of medicines available under their pharmacological group rather than alphabetically. It continues to include information on UK preparations that are available from veterinarians, pharmacists, agricultural merchants and pet shops. However, this edition also includes full product details for some preparations available in Australia, Eire, New Zealand and the USA. This aspect is, no doubt, an attempt to increase sales of the book and UK readers must now be careful that they focus on the information for the UK preparations. There are a number of similarly named products licensed in each of these countries with differing text information and withdrawal periods. The preface to this edition does quite rightly indicate that it is not the aim of this book to contain all information necessary for prescribing. Manufacturers’ data sheets should, at least, be consulted as well. Curiously, the information for countries other than the UK is only undertaken for the first 10 chapters. As a result, it does not cover drugs that are used in the treatment of mastitis, the eye, and malignant disease, as well as drugs acting on the skin and feet and those affecting nutrition and body fluids. In addition production enhancers, herbal medicines and all vaccines are also excluded from this extra listing. There is little doubt that inclusion of a full listing of, for example, vaccines for these other countries would have greatly increased the size of this book.
The book quite rightly echoes the cry from the practitioner that there is a requirement for more veterinary medicines that are authorized for the target species. With the continuing high cost of achieving this in the UK and the slow pace of change within the European Union, this situation will probably remain with us for some time to come. Until such time, dosage rates are included for veterinary medicine use outside the data sheet as well as dosage rates for products without marketing authorization in the target species, and these are clearly marked in the text.

This volume also clearly lists over 500 human medicines where no veterinary authorized preparation is presently available and the drug is commonly used in veterinary practice, almost totally small animal.

At the end of the book, there is a listing of many organizations associated with veterinary practice, and this naturally includes the British Veterinary Association, British Cattle Veterinary Association, British Small Animal Veterinary Association, and British Equine Veterinary Association but not, for some reason, any reference to the British Veterinary Poultry Association (BVPA).

The book continues to grow in size and is now 200 pages longer than the third edition, and some of this can be attributable to the overseas information. The typeface in many parts of the individual drug descriptions is smaller, emphasizing the much greater content. This edition continues the excellent efforts of the earlier ones and, although the complexity of prescribing in a rapidly changing pharmaceutical environment necessitates 712 pages and is thus far from a pocket compendium, it nevertheless represents an essential library item.

This book is not a substitute for other areas of BVA input into veterinary pharmacology, e.g. BVA Pharmacy Courses, but ownership continues to be very necessary for every veterinary practice. All older copies should be classified as obsolete and this new edition purchased now.

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