Book review

Pathology of Australian Native Wildlife

By Philip Ladds
2009. Published by CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne, Australia. 648 pp. Hardback, $AU195.00, ISBN 9780643094444

Philip Ladds is without doubt one of the most accomplished and respected veterinary pathologists in Australia, with a canon of published work ranging from the pathology of the reproductive tract of domestic animals to the spontaneous diseases of a variety of native wild species throughout Australia. However, this book, the distillation of over four decades of research and investigation in wildlife pathology, had got to be his *magnum opus* and a reference that every aspiring – indeed, experienced – wildlife pathologist in Australia should have on the shelf. As a newly arrived wildlife pathologist in this country, I have found this excellent book an invaluable source of information, much of which would have languished in obscure reports, proceedings or archives. As assimilating these reports and data and making them readily available to the diagnostic pathologist was a primary objective for Dr Ladds, he has succeeded admirably in this task.

The book covers the pathology of all of the major vertebrate groups, apart from fish, but includes both aquatic and terrestrial amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. The emphasis is on pathology in free-living animals but diseases of captive native species in Australian and overseas zoos and wildlife parks is also covered, as are diseases of Australian species now feral in other countries, such as brush tailed possums in New Zealand, and some non-native species feral in Australia. Some diseases are covered, albeit in less detail, where they have been described in similar species overseas but not yet recognised or described here. An example of this from my own area of expertise is infectious diseases of marine mammals. The author takes an aetiological approach in his treatment of diseases and the book is divided into 45 chapters, covering viral pathogens, bacteria, fungi and algae, protozoa, helminthes, arthropods, exogenous toxins and neoplasia of each of the aforementioned host species groups. In addition, there are individual chapters on the pathology of stress; congenital, genetic and possibly inherited diseases; nutritional and metabolic diseases; diseases of physical exertion, trauma, predation and miscellaneous injury. The final chapter, in many respects the most fascinating, includes numerous diseases and syndromes of unknown aetiology which, for the budding wildlife pathologist, will provide plenty of inspiration for future research projects. Throughout the book, the author describes the salient clinical signs, gross pathology, and histopathology of the disease and where pertinent, other diagnostic tests that may assist in confirming a diagnosis. Each chapter is illustrated with high-quality colour photographs of gross pathology and histopathology and useful summary tables particularly for helminthes and other parasites, congenital and genetic diseases. A further benefit for those of us new to Australian native fauna, is an appendix listing all native vertebrate species by common and scientific name, organised by taxa in colour-coded tables.

As previously mentioned, this book was written primarily for the diagnostic pathologist but the clarity of the text and the excellence of the illustrations will make it immediately accessible and useful to a variety of wildlife professionals such as clinical veterinarians, zoologists, wildlife managers, zoo curatorial staff, conservation biologists, wildlife carers, researchers and students. This work represents the current state of the art in the first decade of the twenty-first century as far as wildlife pathology in Australia is concerned. We are indebted to Dr Ladds for providing us with such a scholarly treatise which will serve as the benchmark for future investigation into the diseases of free-living wildlife for many years to come.

Pádraig J. Duignan
B.Sc., M.Sc., MVB, Ph.D., MRCVS
Pathology
Veterinary Science
University of Melbourne
Werribee
Victoria 3030

© Australian Mammal Society 2009 10.1071/AMv31n2_BR 0310-0049/09/020147