

Book Review

Frye, F.L., Williams, D.L. (1995): *Self-Assessment Colour Review of Reptiles and Amphibians*. Manson Publishing, London, 192 pp. ISBN 1-874545-32-4. Price: 18.95 £.

The work by Frye and Williams is a booklet of just under 200 pages with numerous photographs, some of them of high quality. Contrary to its somewhat misleading title, it is for the most part a "self assessment colour guide to clinical aspects of reptilian and amphibian diseases". It is a diverse compilation of some 250 cases of disorders, conditions mimicking disease, pathogens, and histological specimens. It is presented in the form of pictures, each accompanied by a few concise questions. The answers, given in the following pages, attest to the authors' considerable background knowledge and comprehensive practical experience. The diverse spectrum of issues ranges from testing the reader's biological education (e.g. sexual dimorphism in tortoises, §192), through serious side effects of drugs (e.g. §26), to the use of high-tech medicine (tumor tissue typing by immunohistochemistry, §225).

At the same time, however, its broad spectrum seems to be the most serious drawback of the booklet: most features, or parts thereof, are only dealt with briefly and superficially. The tessellated structure of the information, lack of cross references and of data on normal laboratory values, staining procedures and diagnostic features, as well as the absence of a bibliography, make this booklet unsuitable both for in-depth study and for differential diagnosis in veterinary medicine. Moreover, the relative importance attached to some of the issues does not appear too well considered (e.g. regarding ethics: on the one hand the justification of releasing a leg-amputated toad is discussed (§206), while on the other hand the moral and financial aspects of treating a pet with acyclovir — a drug so expensive that hundreds of thousands of AIDS patients cannot afford it — are ignored (§67)).

In their acknowledgements, the authors state that "this project has been a joy for both of us"; this statement may be the key to viewing the text in perspective. It may be great fun for the reader, too, to leaf through the pages reviewing his knowledge and sharpening his observation. If the intention of the authors was to draw up a varied, light but gripping reading for herpetologists with an interest in veterinary medicine, their effort has been perfectly successful.

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