

FOREWORD

We live in an age of the new and improved, where the “latest” is always the greatest. Almost daily we are bombarded by messages trying to convince us that some product is better, faster, or more effective. It is thus very gratifying that *The Merck Veterinary Manual*, first introduced in 1955 as a relatively compact little book, continues to be the best selling veterinary reference of its kind. With each succeeding edition, the *Manual* has grown—both in pages and in scope—yet the aim remains the same as that stated by the editors in the first edition: “...to provide the veterinarian with concise, authoritative, and readily available information on diagnosis and treatment of the diseases of animals kept by man for use or pleasure.”

Although the goal remains the same, and the organization of the book will be instantly familiar to previous users, this new edition of the *Manual* has undergone significant changes. The pages have been completely redesigned to make the text easier to scan and help readers locate information more rapidly on the page. Tables also have been redesigned for ease of use. And most noticeably, the *Manual* has been printed in full color for the first time, enabling the addition of a judicious number of images—including original illustrations; radiographic, ultrasonographic, and endoscopic images; photomicrographs; and more—to enhance the text. In all, the book contains approximately 250 images, a number which we hope to increase in the next edition.

Every section of the book has been carefully reviewed and updated. To accommodate the increasing popularity of—and knowledge base regarding—exotic and laboratory animals, the section has been expanded, including more comprehensive coverage of pet birds, fish, rartites, reptiles, and rodents and a new chapter on African hedgehogs. The chapter on laboratory animals now includes a discussion of key regulatory requirements. The Immunology and Behavior sections have been extensively revised to make them more useful to the clinician. The Toxicology section has been reorganized for easier reference, and a new chapter on poisonous mushrooms added. The extensive Zoonoses reference table has been updated with new introductory material, recent zoonoses, and cross references to more complete discussions. In addition, the zoonotic potential of veterinary diseases has been highlighted throughout the *Manual*.

New chapters have been added to provide basic information on emerging issues of importance to veterinarians, including the cloning of domestic animals and complementary and alternative veterinary medicine. Additional new chapters cover diseases and disorders such as equine metabolic syndrome, disorders of potassium metabolism, seminal vesiculitis in bulls, and pseudopregnancy in goats. Many other chapters were substantially revised or rewritten, such as lameness in horses, heart disease and heart failure, and diseases of the stomach and intestines in small animals, to name a few.

To use the *Manual* most effectively, readers are encouraged to become familiar with the Guide for Readers and to use the Table of Contents for each thumb-tabbed section. The extensive Index may be the best first step to locate information on a specific topic. To maintain the handbook style that has been the hallmark of this book, the editors have required concise space limitations of our contributors, and references are not included.

The breadth and depth of coverage in *The Merck Veterinary Manual* is due in great part to the nearly 400 authors who participated in this edition and are included in our listing of Contributors. In addition, many reviewers provided thoughtful comments and suggestions that further improved the content. Without their time and expertise, a reference of this type would not be possible. The global focus of the book is evidenced by continuing publication of foreign language editions, as well as by contributions from authors in 19 countries around the world.

Thanks are also due to the editorial board members who reviewed all chapters within their areas of expertise and provided invaluable suggestions for new content and authors. Their collective knowledge continues to shape the scope of the book. Behind the scenes, the editorial staff at Merial and the publishing group at Merck make completion of this huge task possible. Special thanks to Odilia Achu, who managed virtually every phase of development without losing track of a single detail; to Scott Line, who reviewed several thousand images, selected the most useful, and coordinated their inclusion, in addition to serving as associate editor; and to Susan Aiello, who continues to contribute to the editorial excellence of this publication. Gary Zelko and Pamela Barnes-Paul at Merck bring their expert guidance and enthusiasm to the task of producing and promoting each edition.

The publication of a new book is satisfying, yet we realize that the information contained in it should be available in other forms to increase its usefulness for students and practitioners. *The Merck Veterinary Manual* is already available in several electronic formats, and we will continue to investigate new options for delivery of information during the span of this edition. As always, we look forward to continued feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Cynthia M. Kahn
Editor