

Preface

As any veterinary clinician knows, it is a daunting task to work with cats! Over the years, I have found my experiences as a feline specialist humbling, but also have realized what a great learning opportunity feline medicine provides. Cats force us to be expert diagnosticians, relying more than ever on the “old school” skills of a good medical history and a thorough physical examination. Unfortunately, cats are still the “poor stepchild” in companion animal medicine, receiving less attention in research on common medical problems as well as improved diagnostic and treatment approaches than is given to their canine counterparts. It is therefore fitting that the Winn Feline Foundation has endorsed this book, as the organization has provided the research funding and support necessary to uncover an impressive amount of the information found in this text.

Fortunately, we know much more about feline medicine than we did 10 or 15 years ago. This book compiles the current state of knowledge from a group of talented and wise experts. These superb clinicians and diagnosticians share insights from their many combined years of feline practice, based on available evidence whenever possible, to bring together in one volume comprehensive information on state-of-the-art diagnostic tests, treatments, and techniques. I am grateful for their generosity in sharing and their desire to pass on their knowledge.

The focus of this book is first and foremost practical and concentrates on what most of us can and should accomplish in general practice. It is designed to give veterinarians information that can be used every day in an accessible format. It contains information on new topics (e.g., management of cats with chronic and concurrent diseases, feline life-stage medicine) and expanded information on emerging topics (e.g., genetics, feline-friendly practice, the importance of senior cat care, and the special needs of indoor cats). Throughout the book, algorithms, key points, and many photos are used to illustrate conditions and techniques. The book is also available electronically where the many illustrations will fully come alive.

Presenting the current state of knowledge about feline medicine in one volume presents challenges, but it has forced us to focus on the most important and clinically relevant aspects. Material is organized largely by body system to make finding information easy, and it has been kept concise and readable. In most cases, a logical “road map” for diagnosis and treatment has been provided, such as how to approach the vomiting cat or the cat with diarrhea. Common procedures, such as placing an esophagostomy tube, are described in detail with accompanying photos. Students, and those new to performing certain procedures, will find this approach invaluable. The reader will also find that some topics are covered more than once in different sections of the book. This allows different perspectives and even different points of view on important issues to be presented by experts in their areas of expertise.

The foundations of feline medicine are more important than ever, and thus a full section has been devoted to updated information and techniques for handling and physical examination, the art of taking the medical history, the idiosyncrasies of cats and drug therapy, the most effective drugs and techniques for analgesia, and detailed information on fluid therapy and anesthesia for many different medical situations. Special attention is paid to reducing the barriers that prevent so many of our feline companions from receiving regular veterinary care in a ground-breaking chapter on making your practice feline-friendly.

Veterinarians must continually strive to be open to learning from cats because cats do not give up their secrets easily. Clues are there for those who are willing to observe and listen. This textbook is a guide to that experience and it will enhance every veterinarian’s feline practice skills, whether a new graduate or an “old hand.” Our hope is that it will be your “go-to” reference for feline medicine, whether on your bookshelf or in electronic form.

Susan E. Little, DVM, DABVP (Feline)
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada