

Veterinary Immunology

M. TOMAN

Grada Publishing, Prague, 2000. 416 pp. ISBN 80-7169-727-3). Written in Czech language, price approx. USD 25, available from Noviko, Brno c/o <vri@vri.cz>

A group of basic and applied immunologists led by the Editor-in-Chief, Miroslav Toman from the Veterinary Research Institute in Brno, and 21 co-authors from the Veterinary Research Institute in Brno, the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (Institute of Microbiology, Institute of Molecular Genetics, Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics, Institute of Parasitology), the University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Brno, the Charles University of Prague, Virginia Polytechnical Institute and State University, Blacksburg, U.S.A. as well as the industry (Bioveta) collaborated on the book. The book compiles a large volume of uniquely structured information of veterinary relevance. This should not be surprising, as all the authors are well established researchers in their areas of specialization. The authors have undoubtedly been influenced by, and they drew from the great tradition of the Czech immunology represented by researchers like M. Hasek (Immunological tolerance), J. Sterzl (Developmental aspects of immunity etc.), and many others.

There are many current monographs dealing with the number of aspects of basic immunology, but these invariably these deal exclusively with data acquired from murine and human models. These textbooks, although very informative in general terms, and inspirational by containing ideas for studies in species of veterinary importance, are not relevant as veterinary immunology texts. The research reports acquired from the veterinary important species have been reaching a critical quantity for publication of a textbook starting in early 1970s, and the first books were published in English in 1970s. Among those, the Tizard's Veterinary Immunology – An Introduction (W.B. Saunders Company), achieved most acclaim. It was regularly updated, and it is in its sixth edition (2000) since 1977.

Now, at last, this gap has been filled for the Czech veterinary profession. Although Toman *et al.* have widely referred to the 5th edition (1996) of the Tizard's textbook, the book is truly a piece of original work, and not a paraphrase of Tizard's book. The authors approached all the topics with a wealth of practical research and clinical experience, and they fully succeeded in striking

an intricate balance between conciseness and comprehensives. The book is easy to read, and the material is presented logically, and with clarity. In spite of the large number of authors, the book is not plagued with heterogeneity in the depth of coverage of writing styles, as might normally be expected for a multi-authored book. The uniformity of style and depth of coverage, attests to the excellent co-ordination by the Editor-in-Chief and to the high level of co-operation among the authors.

The preface states, that the book is addressed to veterinary students, veterinarians, as well as to researchers from related fields who need a reference in immunology. I believe that the book will also a good introductory text to graduate students in veterinary immunology, veterinary microbiology, and a variety of other veterinary research areas requiring understanding of immunology. All chapters have a short list of recommended enrichment literature, but the book includes a short list of cited literature only in some chapters, and the citations are not marked in the text. This is a weakness, even though un-referenced textbooks in immunology, as well as other disciplines, are not un-common. For example, the Tizard's textbook is similarly un-referenced, as well as the well recognized textbook in human medical immunology written by I. Roitt. However, the lack of references must be viewed as a limitation, especially when used by researchers and graduate students. The ability to trace the original researcher papers, information from which is included in the book, is invaluable for critical evaluation of the information. It is essential that a reader has the possibility to analyze the original research papers on the topic of his interest, should he so desire. The reader can then interpret the experimental designs, the materials and methods, the results, and the conclusions. In the process of such analyses, he can arrive at his own conclusions, and formulate his own hypotheses if needed. It is possible for un-referenced books to perpetuate unverifiable opinions or "facts" that could be corrected faster, if the original papers were more widely read.

In conclusion, in spite of the above limitation as a research tool, the book will serve very well as the primary text for veterinary students and practicing veterinarians,

and also as an introductory orientation in the comparative immunology to starting researchers. The textbook will undoubtedly have a profound positive influence on the coming generations of veterinarians and veterinary

researchers in the Czech Republic. It remains to be hoped, that the authors will ensure periodic update in the form of revised editions at least twice each decade.

A. Čepica, Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Canada