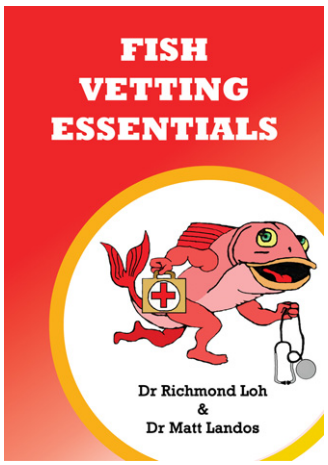
BOOK REVIEW

Fish vetting essentials. Edited by R Loh and M Landos. Richmond Loh Publishing, Perth, 2011. 215 pages. Price $99. ISBN 978 0 98715 710 2.



Fish vetting essentials is a revised version of the self-published *Australian fish vetting essentials* (2007) by the same authors. The purpose of the book is to 'collate the knowledge that aquarists, aquaculturalists, public aquaria, local fish shops and veterinarians already have, and to filter out misinformation and then provide this information in a readily digestible form', and 'to promote to the industry that veterinarians are best equipped to deal in aquatic animal health'. The implication is that *Fish Vetting Essentials* is useful resource for veterinarians either in general practice seeing the occasional ornamental fish or providing services to the commercial fish farming industry.

Unfortunately, *Fish vetting essentials* does not quite meet its stated aim. It does provide useful basic information on fish health and disease, with a focus on ornamental fish. However, it provides only limited, and at times potentially detrimental, information on farmed fish and other aquatic species, such as elasmobranchs (e.g. sharks), molluscs (e.g. abalone, oysters), crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crayfish). For example, the water temperature tolerance range for rainbow trout in freshwater is given as –1–25°C, but rainbow trout would be under considerable stress if exposed to these two temperature extremes. Likewise, the temperature (assumed to be average) given for barramundi in freshwater is 25°C and the tolerance range 15–30°C. Barramundi farmed in recirculation aquaculture systems, where water temperature can be controlled, are generally held between 27–30°C. While their range does extend to areas where at times the water temperature may drop to 15°C, their tolerance of this temperature would be limited.

Fish vetting essentials is written in a friendly, informal style, making it easy to read. It covers a lot of important topics, beginning with a chapter on 'Anatomy and function', which uses the silver perch, an aquaculture species, as the fish model, before describing the various groups and species of commonly available ornamental fish (e.g. cyprinids, cichlids). A chapter on aquarium set-ups, including a section on equipment, gives good, practical information on the various aspects of setting up and maintaining aquariums. The main water quality parameters involved in keeping finfish (e.g. temperature, pH, ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, hardness, salinity, oxygen) are also covered.

The chapter on fish diseases discusses what the authors consider the most common fish diseases of aquarium and pond fish. The Medical corner section provides good advice regarding the treatment of finfish and important information for commercial fish farming, such as 'off label' prescribing and the regulatory/legislative environment in Australia, is addressed. However, although it notes that the dye malachite green is prohibited from use in food fish (page 156), formalin malachite green is recommended as a treatment for *trichodina* (a relatively commonly parasite in food fish; page 124) without any accompanying warning about its use in food fish. It therefore relies on the reader having read all chapters, which will not always happen. There is a strong focus on the individual fish patient, which is what veterinarians in general practice are most likely to encounter, with chapters on practical anaesthesia, surgery and diagnostic Imaging (contributed by Dr Michael Chia), euthanasia and reproduction/breeding. These chapters provide good summaries of the general issues faced when dealing with fish. While the book also provides instructions on what to do if a notifiable aquatic animal disease is suspected, it could be improved by identifying what diseases are notifiable in Australia. This list can (and does) change and varies between states and territories, and the provision of links to government websites where such information can be found would be useful.

As the book is self-published, one would allow the degree of self-promotion found in it. However, the formatting and layout of the book could benefit from a commercial publisher's input along with consistency with labelling of images – many are missing captions and the only way of determining what they represent is by reading the text. While other veterinarians are noted as contributors, it is not clear whether the information provided has been peer-reviewed, information regarding temperatures and tolerance ranges would suggest not. There are also few references in the text; the disclaimer on the final page does request assistance from the reader if they 'recognise where some of the information has been sourced'.

Overall, for the veterinarian who sees the occasional fish, *Fish vetting essentials* has a lot of useful information, and would also be beneficial for the aquarium hobbyist. It is likely be less useful to larger-scale commercial finfish producers or the veterinarians who service those industries.

Paul Hardy-Smith

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