

# PREFACE

Humans and animals have always had a special bond. The role of a pet has developed over the years from that of a simple outdoor guardian, working animal, or mouse-catcher to one of a true companion and family member. Dogs, cats, and other pets have become integral parts of our everyday lives.

Animals have also benefited from their closer association with people. In the past few decades, veterinary drugs, procedures, and vaccines have been developed specifically for animals that have eliminated many of the diseases that once shortened their lives. With these advances has also come an increase in the volume of medical information that is available to pet owners. Books, magazines, and web sites devoted to pet health have proliferated. Some contain good information, while others perpetuate outdated practices and unproven treatments. As with human health, the critical question facing pet owners today is where to find the most trusted and accurate information on pet health care?

*The Merck/Merial Manual for Pet Health* has been developed to meet the needs of pet owners for detailed yet easily understood medical information on every aspect of pet health. The book is closely based on the text of *The Merck Veterinary Manual*, a reference that has served as the most comprehensive and reliable source of information on animal health care for veterinarians for over 50 years. Our goal is to provide a resource—in everyday language—for pet owners that will provide the same comprehensive, up-to-date, and trusted information on all common diseases of pets that their veterinarians have relied on for the past half century.

*The Merck/Merial Manual for Pet Health* covers not only dogs and cats but also horses, ferrets, birds, rabbits, rodents, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and even exotic pets such as potbellied pigs and sugar

gliders. In addition to the information extracted from the most recent edition of *The Merck Veterinary Manual*, we have added chapters covering the basics of pet health care, as well as useful information on emergency care and first aid (including poisonings), diagnostic tests and imaging, common drugs and vaccines for pets, and traveling with pets. Almost 300 illustrations have been specially developed to complement the text. In no other book will the reader find the breadth of coverage contained in this single volume.

In bringing this book to fruition, the editors have relied heavily on the expertise of the many authors and expert reviewers who have contributed to *The Merck Veterinary Manual* over the years and who have shaped the content of this book. The material included here represents the collective knowledge and experience of over 200 of the top veterinary experts from around the world. In addition to providing the original content on which *The Merck/Merial Manual for Pet Health* is based, most have also graciously reviewed the revised material and corrected any inaccuracies. Their names are listed on the pages that follow. We also recognize the efforts of the Merial Publication Services editorial staff and of the Merck Publishing Group who have worked tirelessly over the last two years to make this book a reality.

Pets bring joy and companionship into our daily lives. But pets require more than just love from us. They require a nutritionally sound diet and an appropriate environment that is clean, safe, and mentally stimulating. They require basic care and, in some cases, training. Perhaps most of all, they require preventive health care to ensure a good quality of life and access to appropriate veterinary care when they are injured or ill.

Communicating with your veterinarian is a key part of ensuring good health care

for your pet. Our hope in developing this book is that readers will gain a better understanding of not only the many diseases that can affect their pet or pets, but also how to prevent disease, how to tell when their pet is ill, and how to effectively communicate with their veterinarian to ensure the best possible treatment when illness or injury occurs. Of course, no book can or should replace the expertise and training of a veterinarian who is familiar with and has an ongoing relationship with you and your pet. *The Merck/Merial Manual for Pet Health* is not intended as a manual to be used by pet owners to diagnose and treat their pets but rather as a tool to increase knowledge and promote responsible pet ownership.

Before diving into the text, readers are urged to review the Guide for Readers

found on page xxvii for basic information on how the book is organized and how best to locate specific topics. A Glossary, found in the back of the book, is provided to help readers understand any unfamiliar medical terminology they may encounter.

*The Merck/Merial Manual for Pet Health* is published in an educational partnership between Merck & Co., Inc. and Merial Limited on a not-for-profit basis. The editors hope that you find the information useful, and we warmly welcome your suggestions for improvement.

Cynthia M. Kahn  
*Editor*

Scott Line  
*Associate Editor*

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### Special Note to Readers

The authors, reviewers, editors, and publisher have made extensive efforts to ensure that the information is accurate and conforms to the standards accepted at the time of publication. However, constant changes in information resulting from continuing research and clinical experience, reasonable differences in opinions among authorities, unique aspects of individual situations, and the possibility of human error in preparing such an extensive text require that the reader exercise judgment when making decisions and consult and compare information from other sources. In particular, the reader is advised to discuss information obtained in this book with a veterinarian or other qualified animal health practitioner.

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