



DISEASES AND MEDICAL
MANAGEMENT OF
HOUBARA BUSTARDS
AND OTHER OTIDIDAE

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Tom Bailey

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The most comprehensive book published on the management and veterinary care of bustards has finally been published! This book will be an essential reference to those working with captive or wild bustards, and it also contains a wealth of information that will make it useful to anyone working with many other species of birds in the Middle East. The book has been supported by the National Avian Research Centre, Abu Dhabi, one of the foremost organisations conducting research on and breeding the houbara bustard. An international team of authors have contributed chapters to the book. The Table of Contents is listed below:

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Copies of Diseases and Medical Management of Houbara Bustards and Other Otididae are available from Tom Bailey. Contact: tom.bailey@dfh.ae

BOOK REVIEW - DISEASES AND MEDICAL MANAGEMENT OF HOUBARA BUSTARDS AND OTHER OTIDIDAE

Reviewed by John Chitty BVetMed CertZooMed MRCVS

It is *de rigueur* when reviewing textbooks to criticise. After all, in the majority of reviews, it is the reviewer's duty to tell prospective readers why they should buy that particular book over its rivals. This is not the case for this book. It is unique. While bustards are included in Jaime Samour's excellent "Avian Medicine" they are largely ignored in other texts as the majority of veterinary practitioners in the US and Europe (the major marketing areas for publishers!) will probably never work with them.

Therefore this book has no competition and even if very poor the reviewer would have to recommend it! Fortunately this reviewer faces no such dilemma! The book is excellent and contains a vast amount of knowledge on these species.

There were, I thought, grounds for complaint. My main area of interest is the Great Bustard not the Houbara. As I read through the pages I had a growing feeling that this was not a book about bustards but about the Houbara. Yes, I did then read the title! The title beautifully describes the contents of the book yet, even though the vast majority of the book is devoted to the Houbara, there is an awful lot for those working with other bustard species.

However, it is still a little sad that the chapters on captive management and breeding couldn't contain more on the successful Kori breeding programme in the United States or the Little Bustard in France. Minor complaint – the book is large enough already and there are plenty of references to much of this information.

The veterinary sections are, again, complete. They contain much in-depth knowledge on the medical problems of these species as well as diagnostic techniques anaesthesia and surgery. This information ranges from the basic through to very advanced. I anticipated a book that would assist an experienced avian veterinarian about to work with novel species. Instead this is a book that will not only do this but will also be eminently suitable for those with little general avian experience and who do not have easy access to other sources of information – ie it will be perfect for use in the field (although a large rucksack will be needed!).

The picture quality is very good and there are plenty of them. I am sure that if I made a huge effort I could unearth many minor criticisms or some facts with which I disagree (this is actually unlikely – the authors have included so much of what is published on bustards that few arguments are not well covered!), however, I do not see the need – it is clearly a labour of love and to nitpick a text that represents huge amounts of work by all authors seems simply unjust.

The book is excellent. It must be indispensable to all working with Houbara – veterinarians, of course, but also biologists and all involved in the captive management, conservation, and field studies of this species. It is also essential for veterinarians, biologists, researchers, and zoological collections working with other bustard species.

It is hard to recommend it for those not directly working with bustards, although it is a well-written and interesting book and, to be honest, it is a book that covers the basics of clinical sampling, anaesthesia, surgery and therapeutic techniques very well. I would, therefore, be very happy to advise any veterinary student or inexperienced avian veterinarian to read it as well even if their primary focus was with other avian species.

Congratulations to Tom and all the authors – this is an impressive work and I know that my copy will be very well-thumbed!