OIE/FAO International Scientific Conference on Avian Influenza
Edited by Alejandro Schudel and Michel Lombard
Basel, Switzerland: Karger, 2006 273 pp., illustrated. $236.50 (paper).

This conference proceeding is an indispensable resource for veterinarians, physicians, public health officials, policy makers, and other professionals dealing with avian influenza. It comprehensively covers all of the major issues regarding avian influenza: ecology and epidemiology, pathogenesis, human infections, diagnostics, and control and management. General conclusions and recommendations are provided at the end of the volume. There is also a poster section with detailed surveillance results from South Africa, Israel, and Cambodia—areas for which little information was available previously.

This conference was organized by the World Organization for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The World Health Organization was also invited. This type of joint meeting is a welcome initiative to foster better coordination and collaboration in research, surveillance, and formulation of policies to reduce public health risk, particularly in association with poultry industries. As stated in the opening remarks of the proceedings, avian influenza has enormous economic and social impact in affected countries and has already cost billions of dollars in Asia.

Each section is filled with excellent articles written by top experts in the field. For example, I find the description on the epidemiology and ecology of avian influenza in Southeast Asia and the article describing the use of avian influenza vaccine in Hong Kong to be very comprehensive, informative, and well illustrated with maps, tables, and diagrams.

For ethical, ecological, and economic reasons, mass killing of birds may not be an acceptable method for the control and eradication of the virus; therefore, research on vaccines should be a high priority. A unique perspective from a vaccine manufacturer outlines the challenges and latest developments in this area.

To prepare for the possibility of a human influenza pandemic, almost 90% of possible combinations of HA and NA subtypes have been stocked as vaccine strain candidates and for diagnostic use, although perhaps H16 should also be included in this “antigen bank.” It is interesting to note that, in this antigen bank, the only virus available for H13 subtype is H13N6.

That avian influenza virus respects no national boundaries is best illustrated by the fact that no country can declare itself to be free from the virus in wild birds. Therefore, in the section regarding control and management, a new concept of compartmentalization is introduced and discussed in detail.

For those who did not attend this conference, the summarized recommendations are particularly useful. However, a transcript of question-and-answer sessions or formal discussions that took place during the conference would have been even better. This proceeding also includes a list of participants and their contact information, which provides a valuable resource for networking.

The detection of H5N1 in pigs is a significant finding. However, the presentation by Chen and colleagues was covered in this book by an abstract only. Other shortcomings include that full-length articles are provided for some of those presentations listed in the poster section, whereas only the abstracts are published for other presentations. In short, this is an excellent book for anyone interested in avian influenza.

Acknowledgments


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Pathogenic Treponema: Molecular and Cellular Biology
Edited by Justin D. Radolf and Sheila A. Lukehart

This new compilation of chapters on the molecular and cellular biology of treponemes is extremely timely, because dramatic progress has been made since the last summary of treponemal research was edited by Schell and Musher in 1983 [1]. Radolf’s and Lukehart’s accomplishment in collecting virtually all aspects of research on the genus Treponema into a single volume is a great service to the field. It is readily apparent that a tremendous amount of care went into the preparation of this book. Each chapter is a detailed and balanced review, richly supplied with references. In most chapters, the accessibility of the information presented is enhanced by useful illustrations and tables. The authors have been careful to provide readers with both a historical perspective and the latest discoveries. Contributions from leading experts representing the ma...