

Falco



Middle East Falcon Research Group

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Letter from the Chairman's Office Report by Jaime Samour

The New Year promise to be as exciting as 1995 for many individual members and the Group as a whole. After a humble start in 1994, the Group has grown at an alarming rate with over 150 members worldwide and the number keeps growing at a steady rate every month. Last year we held two short, but very productive local workshops, one on Aspergillosis and the second on Serratospiculum. We are planning a series of local/regional workshops this year on different topics relevant to the biology, conservation and medical aspects of falcons. On this occasion however, we will have the active participation of Professor John E. Cooper presently the Programme Manager at the National Avian Research Centre and a well-know raptor scientist and a world-class veterinary surgeon/pathologist for many years standing. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members who participated in those workshops and made possible a positive interaction. We sincerely hope that you will be able to continue supporting these type of events and to continue contributing towards our understanding of health and diseases and other important topics in falcons and other birds of prey.

Last year, the activities of the Group were crowned with the Specialists Workshop held on 14th to 16th November in the city of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. We were all pleased with the outcome of the Workshop since it was well attended, the contributions were all superb and we had a good press coverage throughout the event.

I think that it was a bit unfair that most of the congratulations for the outcome of the event were directed towards me, while in fact other people deserved much more credit for all the hard work in planning and organising the meeting. Kara Rawden from the Resources Department at the National Avian Research Centre (NARC) made an outstanding contribution in setting up the whole thing. She very skilfully dealt with visas, air tickets, hotel

affairs and only God knows what else. She was assisted by Mr Basheer of the same Department. Abdul Aziz Al Midfa and Theri Bailey, from the Public Relations of NARC, made an excellent job coordinating press releases, dealing with members of the press, assisting with the preparations at the conference room and many other tasks. They were assisted by Mr Mohammed Rai from the same Department. Professor Cooper, Programme Manager of NARC, and his wife Margaret helped enormously with generous advise and support while setting up the Workshop. During the event, they were very active looking after delegates and provided support were needed. They also kindly organised a little reception in their suite for the participants. They were assisted by their son Max who was in the Emirates for a short visit. Dr. Nick Fox, Director of the Falcon Programme, and his wife Barbro made also an enormous contribution to the event. They were both deeply involved in setting up the programme, contacted participants, helped preparing the guest list and served as much-appreciated and self-designated Public Relation Officers throughout the Workshop. Without the help of Kara Rawden, Basheer, Abdul Aziz Al Midfa and Theri Bailey, John and Margaret Cooper and Nick and Barbro Fox, the success of the Workshop would not have been possible. Please receive my deep appreciation for your effort and dedication.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my most sincere greetings to all members of our Group and to wish you and your loved ones a New Year full of happiness, family warmth and professional and personal satisfaction.

I certainly look forward to a New Year full of productive research programmes and active collaboration within your own Institutions and with your own Middle East Falcon Research Group.

“When you hear the applauses of your success, listen as well to the laughter of your failures”

News update from the Veterinary Hospital, Dubai, UAE.

Report by Mr Peter McKinney MRCVS

Another hunting season is nearly over and I feel some points are worth mentioning.

1.- The numbers of captive-bred falcons, especially Gyr hybrids, has increased dramatically this season. In most cases the birds adapt well, although I admit that a lot depends on the experience and patience of the falconer. These captive-bred birds seem to cope with the rigors of training and are perhaps less prone to some stress-related diseases?. I do however anticipate problems during the very hot summer months.

2.- For me the most encouraging development is that many previously sceptical falconers now appreciate the diagnostic value of endoscopy to detect very early cases of aspergillosis infection

which responds well to rest and veterinary care. Unfortunately, I still see many advance cases for which treatment is of no value. Most falconers now realise that prompt detection and therapy offers a reasonable chance of success and the term ‘‘ridad’’ (Arabic word for aspergillosis) no longer means death.

3.- Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to warn of the dangers of using the so called ‘‘feather changing’’ products. I have received conflicting reports from falconers who have used these ‘‘wonder-medicines’’, presumably thyroxine, to induce moulting especially in peregrine falcons. In some cases all went well, but many disasters have occurred. Although the timing of the moult may not suit the hunting season in the Middle East, most dedicated falconers accept that nature know best.

An outbreak of an infectious respiratory syndrome in recently imported ostriches (*Struthio camelus*) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Report by Dr Abdul Rahman Baig, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Infectious respiratory syndrome is frequently observed in recently imported juvenile and adult ostriches (Huchermeyer, 1994). Stress has been implicated in triggering this condition. Contributing factors to stress are overcrowded conditions, travelling over long distances, sudden changes of climate and diet. This paper reports an outbreak of infectious respiratory syndrome in a flock of newly imported ostriches in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

History

One hundred and twenty black-necked ostriches (*Struthio camelus*) were transported by air from Namibia to Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, the flock was transported by road from Riyadh to a nearby farm. The flock was intended for commercial farming. The total journey to the final destination was 80 hrs. The

weather in Saudi Arabia was hot and dry with temperatures between 45 to 48°C, in contrast to the humid and moderate weather in Namibia at the time of transport. On the second day after arrival, the birds were flocked into a small pen measuring 10 x 10 m and then handled individually to administer an anthelmintic preparation orally. The handlers were inexperienced and it took over 4 hrs to dose all birds. The weather on that particular day was very hot and dry. Five to six days after arrival, many of the birds were observed displaying gasping and laborious breathing. Some birds developed oedematous swellings around the eyes, in particular around the infraorbital sinuses, resulting in closure of the eye on the side concerned. The appetite was affected in some birds while others continued eating normally. In terminal cases, recumbency and opisthotonus were observed. Some birds died without showing previous respiratory signs.

Post-mortem findings

Post-mortem examination carried out by the author and veterinarians at the King Khalid

Wildlife Research Centre (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) observed the following pathological changes: congested trachea and bilateral pneumonia; bronchi and lungs filled with a bloody exudate; coelomic cavity contained large amounts of fibrinous material, enlarged and inflamed thoracic lymph nodes; petechial haemorrhages on pericardium and endocardium and on the spleen; liver pale and friable. A total of 14 birds died.

Bacteriology investigations revealed:

Heart: *Clostridium* sp, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Proteus mirabilis*.

Lungs: *Proteus* sp, *Clostridium* sp.

Peritoneal exudate: *Clostridium* sp and *Streptococcus* sp.

Parasitological and bacteriological investigations carried out on faecal samples did not yield pathogenic bacteria or parasites. Mycology carried out on tissue samples was also negative.

The clinical diagnosis was concluded as being infectious tracheitis, pneumonia and airsacculitis of mixed origin.

Treatment

All birds within the flock were subdivided into smaller groups and placed in different pens. Before sensitivity tests were concluded, several antibiotics were tried without any positive effect. Oxytetracycline was the antibiotic indicated and this was immediately administered via the drinking water. A 5%

oxytetracycline hydrochloride commercially available preparation was used (Terramycin soluble powder - Pfizer). Affected birds received a curative dose (8 to 12 g per 50 l of water) while normal birds were given a preventive dose (3 to 6 g per 50 l of water). In addition, a long-acting injectable oxytetracycline preparation (Terramycin LA - Pfizer) was used intramuscularly at a dose rate of 200 mg (1 ml) per 10 kg bodyweight. As supportive therapy, a multivitamin preparation (Tonophospan - Hoechst) was also given intramuscularly to affected birds at a dose of 5 ml per bird. This therapy was maintained for 5 days. Birds responded very well to this treatment and recovered relatively fast.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Nigel Brown and Dr Osama from the King Khalid Wildlife Research Centre (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) for their kind cooperation and for carrying out post-mortem and microbiology examinations and to Dr Karen of Sweet Water Veterinary Hospital, Texas USA for valuable advice.

Reference

Huchzermeyer, F. W. (1994) Ostrich Diseases. Agricultural Research Council, Onderstepoort, South Africa.

Editor's Note: Although this article has clearly nothing to do with "Raptors", it is of general interest to veterinarians in the region. We would like to encourage colleagues to write this kind of clinical case reports and we will try to accommodate them in future issues if space becomes available.

"The best time to do something worthwhile is between yesterday and tomorrow"

Book review

Manual of Raptors, Pigeons and Waterfowl

Published by BSAVA, Cheltenham, Glos, England, UK.

This latest manual produced by the BSAVA, is one of the first with a new format. The manual is A4 size, soft back, 352 pages, with 159 colour and 26 mono illustrations. The books scientific editors are Neil Forbes and Nigel Harcourt-Brown, two of the most experienced raptor clinicians on an international basis, the general editor is Peter Beynon. The book is designed as an easily accessed reference for clinicians, the entire book being of a clinical problem solving nature. There are a number of very useful flow charts, tables, diagrams, which guide clinicians through the diagnostic, nursing and therapeutic maize. There are a total of 30 contributors, which not only include many very experienced UK veterinarians but also international experts in their fields such as Cooper, Redig, Dorrestein and Lumeij.

The manual starts with a general section dealing with subject areas which relate to all three bird groups namely, examination, diagnostic procedures, attending the acute trauma case, nursing therapeutics, cytology, biochemistry, haematology, anaesthesiology, radiology, autopsy and zoonotic aspects. There then follows a separate section on specific clinical problems which are relevant to each

group. In the raptor section the following subjects are addressed, husbandry and nutrition, dermatology, head and ophthalmic conditions, foot and leg problems, wing conditions, respiratory disease, chronic weight loss, vomition, nervous disease, breeding problems, neonatal disease and finishes with a miscellaneous chapter for small topics which are not covered elsewhere. The pigeon and waterfowl sections then continue, with their chapters tackling problems where they differ from the affliction raptors.

The text is not designed to be fully comprehensive in relation to all diseases suffered anywhere in the world, however it is the most comprehensive, and the same time the most clinician friendly text on clinical disease of raptors which has been published to date.

Having had the benefit of a pre-publication review, at the time of going to print the final cost price is not yet available, however it is likely to be in the region of 45 pounds sterling, which is considered to be very reasonable bearing in mind the size and contents of the publication.

Book review

Report by J. E. Cooper, National Avian Research Centre, UAE.

“Caring for Birds of Prey” by Jerry Olsen.

Wild Ones Animal Books, Springville,

California, USA

1990 (reprinted 1994), 81 pages, ISBN O 85889 353 3.

In his Preface to this book the author states that “*Caring for Birds of Prey* is written about Australian raptors in Australian conditions” and goes on to explain that there is a need for such a book because 1) other books from the Northern Hemisphere often concentrate on the use of falconry techniques - and falconry is illegal in Australia, and 2) Australians often don't have access to publications from other parts of the world and need literature of their own.

This said, the book is of interest and value both to Australians and non-Australians who are concerned with the rehabilitation, maintenance and breeding of birds of prey. There are four sections: these deal with Humans, Keeping Raptors in Captivity, Rehabilitation, Hack and Fostering, and Breeding. Each of these sections is further subdivided and as a result the book covers a wide range of topics relating to raptors and their care. For example, in section II, (Keeping Raptors in Captivity) there are four chapters (3-6). The first covers housing and discusses all aspects of accommodating birds. The second deals with diet and the various animal species that can be used as food items and how best to kill, preserve and present these. In the third, daily management and handling are outlined and include catching raptors, trimming beaks and

talons, care of young birds and transportation. The final chapter in this section, (Injuries and Disease) describes a number of well-recognised infectious and non-infectious conditions of birds of prey and outlines treatment.

There are several pages of useful references at the end of the book, including some Australian publications which will be of interest and value to those who may not have access to such literature or not regularly consult it. There follow three Appendices. Appendix I lists items for a raptor first aid kit which are recommended for use when working with sick or injured birds. Appendices II and III are case studies - an immature female little eagle and an adult male collared sparrowhawk respectively. In both cases the care and treatment of the birds are described and provide useful examples of how routine records should be kept.

The book contains a few black and white photographs, but its particular fortu is the line drawings by Robert Bartos. These are clear and very informative and cover such practical issues as anatomy, application of jesses, how to imp feathers and design of accommodation.

This is not an extensive book but it contains a lot of information and, by definition, may need to be consulted at short notice when the reader is confronted with a sick, injured or displaced bird. A disappointment is, therefore, the absence of any index as it is essential to be able to locate a particular topic promptly and obtain appropriate advice.

There are other criticisms that might be levelled at this book. Some would argue that the author has attempted to include too much in a relatively slim volume and, as a result, has not covered any particular topic in sufficient detail. In this context, less attention might well have been paid to diseases and their treatment on the grounds that this is primarily the responsibility of an experienced veterinary surgeon and in any case factual information about disorders is available in many other textbooks. The first aid kit will undoubtedly be of value to those who have limited experience of treating birds, but the use of trade names in the list and mention of some unspecified compounds (e.g. "yellow lotion") may make it difficult to apply this information in other parts of the world.

"Caring for Birds of Prey" can be recommended to all who have an interest in raptors and, in particular, their care in captivity.

The orientation is indeed, very much towards Australia (although, surprisingly, written in American English) but much of the material is of relevance to work elsewhere. At a time when more and more publications are appearing on the subject of raptor care, rehabilitation and treatment, it is refreshing to find a new soft-covered volume that is easy and pleasant to read, readily transported in the field and which provides so much valuable data. In the space of eighty pages, the author has managed to provide ample information for those who are concerned with raptors, particularly in Australia. Jerry Olsen's book should be a useful addition to the library of all those who work with birds of prey whether this be in the field of falconry, captive breeding, rehabilitation, veterinary care or studies in the wild. In any second edition, besides adding an index, thought should be given to translating the work into other languages, for example Spanish, so that the useful material it contains can be made available to raptor enthusiasts in non-Anglophone parts of the world.



"No dream comes true until you wake up and go to work"

News and views

New publications on birds of prey from Hancock Wildlife Research Center

Understanding the Bird of Prey

Dr Nick Fox
ISBN 0-88839-317-2

A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors

Brian K. Wheeler and William S. Clark
ISBN 0-12-745330-2

City Peregrines

Saul Frank
ISBN 0-88839-330-X

Life with Birds

Ronald Stevens
ISBN 0-88839-318-0

The Compleat Falconer

Frank L. Beebe
ISBN 0-88839-253-2

Hawking With Golden Eagles

Martin Hollinshead
ISBN 0-88839-343-1

Pirates of the Plains

Adventures with The Prairie Falcons in the High
Desert
Bruce A. Haak
ISBN-0-88839-320-2

The Hunting Falcon

Bruce A Haak
ISBN 0-88839-292-3

A Falconry Manual

Frank L. Beebe
ISBN 0-88839-978-2

Some Time with Eagles and Falcons

Jerry Olsen
ISBN 0-88839-375-X

Hawking Ground Quarry

A Treatise on Hawking
Martin Hollinshead
ISBN 0-88839-320-2

Newcastle Disease studies at the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory, Dubai

Research on Newcastle Disease continues at the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory (CVRL) in Dubai. Dr. Ulrich Wernery (Priv. Doz. Dr. Dr. habil) and his team have managed to isolate nearly 100 strains of the virus over the last 10 years. These strains have been isolated mainly from saker, peregrine, and barbary falcons and from pigeons, partridges, quails, chickens, houbara and white-bellied bustards. The strains are

freeze-dried and kept safely at the CVRL. In addition, the CVRL have successfully isolated two possible different strains of Herpes virus from gyr falcons. The Middle East Falcon Group is very proud to be associated with the CVRL and I would like, in behalf of the Group to congratulate Dr Ulrich Wernery and his colleagues for their outstanding contribution to falcon and avian medicine.



"The most difficult thing to open is a closed mind"

Dates for your diary

The 4th European Association Avian Veterinarians Conference

London, England 18 - 23 May 1997

Chairman of the Scientific Programme

Mr Neil A. Forbes MRCVS

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The 1996 Association of Avian Veterinarians Annual Conference and Expo

Tampa, Florida, USA, 27 - 31 August

AAV Conference Office

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Specialists Workshop of the Middle East Falcon Research Group

Proceedings update

The Proceedings of the Specialists Workshop of the Middle East Falcon Research Group held on 14th - 16th November in the city of Abu Dhabi is in its final stage. I am grateful to all those speakers who kindly handed their manuscripts on a diskette during the Workshop. During the compilation of the papers into a single document, there were some minor and inevitable mishaps. Some diskettes were saved into a different format and our PC's could not read them, others have some nasty-looking computer viruses and one member sent a diskette complete blank with no manuscript at all! Anyway, it was somehow interesting to put the whole thing together. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Mr Nabil Marchi from the Resources Department at NARC for checking all

the diskettes and for providing a much-needed support.

We have now the first draft, but I am still waiting to receive the final draft of the major papers to finalise the work. Nick Fox and I have decided that one copy of the Proceedings should be given free to each participant. Extra copies or copies for members will be available at \$ 10.00 USA dollars each. Please place your orders now. Cheques should be made payable to the "National Avian Research Center" and sent together with your orders to the following address: "The Middle East Falcon Research Group, P.O. Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates".

"It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice"

The Middle East Falcon Research Group

The Middle East Falcon Research Group (MEFRG) intends to bring together experts in falcons and falconry, veterinary surgeons, falcon biologists and conservationists working in the Middle East and other professionals interested in falcons and falconry from around the world.

The main objectives of the MEFRG are:

1.- To provide

- A central body for the coordination of research activities related to falcons and falconry.
- A common forum for exchange of information and for promoting collaborative research programmes.

2.- To promote

- Research on health and diseases in falcons, falcon moulting patterns in the Middle East and falcon nutrition, captive breeding programmes and semen cryopreservation and artificial insemination.
- Field studies on falcon migration, taxonomy, morphometrics, reproductive biology, nutritional ecology and behaviour.
- Improved management conditions of captive falcons through educational awareness programmes.
- A better understanding of falconry as part of the Arab cultural heritage.

3.- To hold

- Regional workshops on veterinary medical aspects, falcon biology topics, falconry and conservation issues.
- An International Conference immediately after the International Advisory Committee Meeting (IAC) of the National Avian Research Centre. It is envisaged to publish the papers and posters presented at the conference in the form of proceedings.

4.- To publish

- Joint papers on aspects concerning falcons and falconry.

- A quarterly newsletter containing contributions on medical, biological and conservation topics of common interest, new developments and recent medical advances.

- Membership

Any veterinary surgeon, biologist, conservationist or falconer working in the Middle East or any other person interested in medical, biological and conservation aspects of falcons and falconry from around the world

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“Some people treat life like a slot machine, putting in as little as possible while hoping for the jackpot”