Preparing your Practice for Exotics

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Exotic pet ownership

Why exotics?

- Motivations
  - Serving underserved areas
  - Filling a need
  - Personal interest
  - Financial?
Main considerations

• Interest/Demand
  • Personal and community
• Training
  • Doctors and support staff
• Equipment
  • Medications

Defining your interests

• Species
  • Small mammals
    • Herbivores
    • Carnivores (Ferrets)
  • Marsupials
  • Reptiles/Amphibians
  • Birds
    • Psittacines
    • Poultry/waterfowl
  • Fish
  • Wildlife?
Defining your interests

• Surgery
  • Routine/elective surgery
  • Castration/Ovariectomy/Ovariohysterectomy
• Dental trimming
• Emergency surgery
• Endoscopy

Determining the needs for your area

• Who else is seeing exotics?
  • 10-20 mile radius
  • Checking website for services
  • Cold calling
  • Asking other local veterinarians

Determining the needs for your area

• Species needed?
  • Check local pet stores
  • Common species sold
  • Common items in stock
• Local exotics groups
  • Bird
  • Reptile
  • Rabbit/small mammal rescues
  • Fish groups
Determining the needs for your area

- Amount of time allocated
  - Routine appointment schedules
  - Emergency care

- Veterinary coverage
  - Number of days a week covering exotics
  - Where do they go when you aren’t there?
  - Relation with local emergency clinic
  - Relation with another exotics vet

- Emergency hospitals
  - On call for exotics?

Training

- Doctor
  - Previous experience
  - Continuing education
  - Current books/literature
  - Professional organizations
  - Shadowing opportunities
Upping your exotics game

• Professional Organizations
  • AAV
  • AEMV
  • ARAV
  • AAWV
  • AAFV

Upping your exotics game

• Books and literature
  • Exotic Animal Formulary, 5th ed
  • Clinical Veterinary Advisor: Birds and Exotic Pets
  • Ferrets, Rabbits, and Rodents, 3rd ed
  • Manual of Exotic Pet Practice
  • Veterinary Clinics of North America: Exotic Animal Practice

Upping your exotics game

• https://lafeber.com/vet/
Training

- Technicians/assistants
  - Previous training
    - Do they need to be re-trained?
  - Professional organizations
  - Shadowing

Training

- CSR/reception
  - Basics of each species
  - Recognizing emergency situations
  - Processing history forms
  - Understanding scheduling needs
  - Triaging phone calls from non-clients

Training

- Kennel staff
  - Proper care of hospitalized patients
  - Proper cleaning for each species
  - No sprays for birds
Equipping your practice

• What’s in your practice already
  • Waiting room
  • Exam room

Waiting room

• Ideal:
  • Separate area for exotics
  • Keep exotics restrained in carrier at all times
  • Move from waiting room to exam room ASAP
  • Immediately triage sick appointments

Exam room

• Safe for all species
  • Easy to disinfect surfaces
  • Tables
    • Watch for wires on hydraulic tables
  • Low ceilings
    • No open vents or holes in ceiling
    • No clearance above or below cabinets
    • No windows
Exam room

• Properly stocked
  • Gram scale
  • Towels
  • Bird net, if needed
  • Dental speculum
  • Light source +/- magnification
  • Nail trimmers of varying sizes

Equipping your practice

• What do you already have?
  • Incubator
  • Caging
  • Small mammals
  • Scales
  • Gram scale?

Equipping your practice

• Specialized food
  • Small mammals
    • Hay, pellets, greens
    • Critical care for herbivores
Equipping your practice

• Specialized food
  • Birds
    • High quality pellets, varying sizes
    • “Junk food” – seeds, millet
    • Hand feeding formula

• Specialized food
  • Reptiles
    • Greens for herbivores
    • Generally do not need to keep prey items

• Critical care/hospitalized patient diets
  • Herbivore
    • A MUST FOR SMALL MAMMALS, reptiles
  • Carnivore
    • Reptiles (snakes)
  • Omnivore
    • Birds, some reptiles

• Stock for in hospital use and for dispensing to clients
Equipping your practice

• Dremmel
  • Nail/beak trims
  • Can be used with dental attachments
  • Multi purpose tool for exotics care

Equipping your practice

• Small mammal dental supplies
  • Dental burs/files
  • Diamond disc for incisors
  • Dental instruments

  • Do not clip incisors with nail trimmers
  • Uneven wear and fractured teeth
  • Get proper equipment

Equipping your practice

• Reptiles/Birds
  • Incubators for hospitalization
    • Completely escape proof for all species
    • Heat regulation
    • +/- oxygen
Equipping your practice

• Reptiles
  • Heat support options
    • Heat lamps
    • Heating pads
  • Lighting

• Surgical supplies
  • Insulin syringes for accurate dosing
  • Proper medications for anaesthetic protocols
    • e.g. Midazolam

Equipping your practice

• Intubation?
  • 2.0-3.5 tubes for small mammals
    • Blind intubation
    • Endoscopic guided
  • Laryngeal masks
    • V-gel
  • Smaller tubes?
    • 18 or 16G catheters for smaller reptiles
Equipping your practice

- Non-rebreather for most species
- Small volume ventilator
- Doppler for heart rate
- Specialized monitoring equipment for elevated HR (>280)

Equipping your practice

- Tools for catheterization
  - 24G and 26G IV catheters
  - IO catheterization
- Syringe pumps for lower fluid rates

Equipping your practice

- Surgical supplies
  - Instrumentation
  - Fine point instruments
  - Lone star retractor
  - Magnifying loops
  - Hemostats
    - Electrocautery
      - Ellman electrocautery tips
      - Small hemoclips
  - Smaller absorbable suture (3-0, 4-0, 5-0)
Equipment your practice

- Medications
  - Majority of medications are extra label use
  - Caution in "production" animals
    - Poultry, waterfowl, pigs

- Ceftazidime
  - Third generation cephalosporin
  - Stored in powder form
    - Reconstitute and freeze to maintain shelf life
  - Reptiles, amphibians, septic parrots

- Leuprolide acetate (Lupron)
  - GnRH agonist
  - Ferrets
    - Hormonal regulation of adrenal disease
  - Birds
    - Control of egg laying
    - Guinea pigs
      - Suppression of clinical signs with active ovarian cysts
  - Can be compounded or reconstituted and frozen
Equipping your practice

- Deslorelin acetate (Superlorin-F)
  - GnRH agonist
  - Ferrets only in US
    - Implant for hormonal regulation of adrenal disease
    - Extra-label use is prohibited per insert

Equipping your practice

- Compounded medications
  - Check your local regulations for rules on compounding
  - Establish a relationship with a trusted compounding pharmacy

Equipping your practice

- Common compounded medications
  - Enrofloxacin
  - Doxycycline
  - Gabapentin
  - Tramadol
  - Chloramphenicol
  - Terbinafine
Feeling comfortable?

- Exotics care is always evolving
  - Current peer reviewed literature
  - Professional organizations
    - Conferences

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Summary

- Evaluating your:
  - Intent
  - Staff
  - Equipment
- Exotic animal medicine can be rewarding with the right preparation
- Never get comfortable, always keep learning and evolving

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