
During recent decades, the significance of parasitology for human and veterinary medicine has not decreased but, on the contrary, the basic knowledge of parasitoses and their agents has become increasingly quite necessary for physicians and veterinarians, as well as for biologists. It is mainly due to increased world-wide travelling, especially tourism of Europeans and people from other regions of the temperate zone to tropical countries, and broad international trade; in this way, new types of parasites are imported from other geographical regions. Many hundred millions of people of the Third World still suffer from the parasites and there are enormous economic losses on domestic and other utility animals particularly in these developing countries. In human parasitology, there is at present an increased interest in the opportunistic agents of the parasitoses associated with patients’ immunosuppression due to HIV infection, giving thus a new dimension to parasitology.

All these aspects, as well as recent interests in parasitology to utilize immunobiological methods and molecular-biology techniques have been taken into account by the first author of the above mentioned manual when preparing its fourth, actualized edition.

This very useful book, the previous third edition of which appeared in 1989 (the first edition was published by Prof. G. Piekarshki in 1954), was prepared by two distinguished and internationally well-known German parasitologists, Prof. Heinz Mehlhorn, the head of the Chair of Special Zoology and Parasitologie of the Ruhr University in Bochum, and the late Prof. Gerhard Piekarshki, then the head of the Chair of Medical Parasitology in Bonn and the long-time editor of the internationally well-known parasitological journal Zeitschrift für Parasitenkunde (recently re-named Parasitology Research).

As the authors state, the conception of this publication is directed to human parasites and pathogens of animals, description of their morphology and their mostly complicated life-cycles, pointing out major problems of the various aspects of scientific research in this field and, in the new edition, inclusion of new methods in the study of host-parasite-environment relationships.

A relatively short introductory chapter I (12 pp.) deals generally with the phenomenon of parasitism, explains the ways of parasite infections, development of parasites, host specificity, pathogenicity, host’s immunological response and immunological and molecular-biology methods. In this way the reader obtains a brief, fundamental overview of the above mentioned problems which is important for understanding the following text of the book; unfortunately, the papers cited in this chapter are absent from the list of references at the end of the book.

The main part of the book is represented by chapter II entitled “Parasites of humans and utility animals”, treating three main groups of parasites: Protozoa/Protista (p.15–141), Helminthes (p. 14–330) and Arthropoda (p. 331–402). Individual lower taxonomic units (phyla, orders) are characterized by their morphological and biological properties and the most important species are dealt with mainly in relation to their significance as the originators of parasitic diseases. This part contains many schematic line drawings, light microscopic and electron microscopic (SEM and TEM) micrographs of high quality as well as numerous tables which are very helpful in understanding the contents of the text. The manual is well treated and enables the reader to obtain basic knowledge about the parasites included and the diseases caused by them.

It is understandable that, by far, it is impossible to deal with all parasites of man and animals of economic importance in the book of such a restricted extent and that it was necessary to select only the most important species as examples. Nevertheless, it is somewhat surprising that there is practically no mention of capillarid nematodes in the text dealing with helminths, although many species of this remarkable group of highly pathogenic parasites are causative agents of serious diseases of both farm animals (mammals, poultry, fish) and man (e.g. Aonchotheca philippinensis). Some information might have been given as well about some of the most important helminth parasites of cultured fish, for example some cestodes (Khavia, Proteocephalus) or nematodes (Anguillicola).

The book is supplemented by the list of references (10 pp.) arranged according to the individual groups of parasites, an index of the Latin names and parasitological and biological terms (118 pp.), and by control questions (11 pp.) to the contents of the book, enabling the reader to select the correct answer from the five possibilities offered.

The aim of this book is to present in a brief manner the basic data on important parasites and parasitoses caused by them and thus provide a good amount of knowledge in this respect mainly to physicians and veterinarians. The text is well written and well arranged, supplemented by many high-standard line drawings and photographs, making this book an excellent, modern parasitological manual which will undoubtedly be widely used not only by physicians and veterinarians but also by other specialists interested in these problems as well as by university students.

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