

EXOTIC

A PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR CLINICIANS

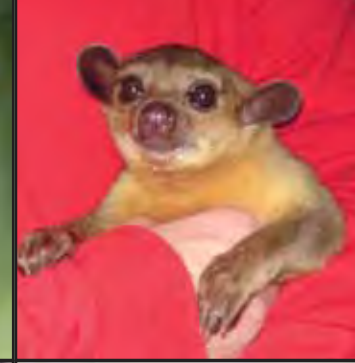
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Quick Reference
Guide to 21
Exotic Species

Aleutian Disease
in a Ferret





CLINICIAN'S QUICK REFERENCE
GUIDE TO SELECTED CAPTIVE

Exotic Species

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As a zoo veterinarian, I am expected to know about many different animal species, some of which are unique and for which there are very few published references. This is also the case for the private practitioner known as an “exotic animal veterinarian.” Although he or she may prefer to use their experience and expertise with more “domesticated” exotic animals, such as rabbits, ferrets, rats and parrots, we all know that at some time they may be called on to treat other less commonly seen species. One of the greatest frustrations with seeing these species as patients is gathering basic information about them prior to entering the exam room.

In response to an online survey of Exotic DVM readers, a list of interesting animals occasionally seen as exotic pets was developed. This article is a result of that initial list. The following pages

provide brief introductory notes about 21 of those species for which basic natural history and husbandry information may be needed by the exotic animal veterinarian in private practice. We must emphasize that inclusion of these species does not indicate their recommendation as pets, and many of the species listed should not be considered as pets by the majority of the population. Unfortunately, that does not stop them from occasionally appearing within the pet trade.

Although every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information within this article, it is the responsibility of the clinician to evaluate the use of this material and to update it as new data becomes available.

Jack Kottwitz, DVM
Guest Medical Editor

Coatimundi (coati) (*Nasua sp.*)

By **Sandra Grant, DVM**



ORIGIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South and Central America, southwestern US
FREE-RANGING HABITAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arboreal; wooded areas; prefer more humid climates
ADULT SIZE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41-67 cm (1.5-2 feet) head to base of tail + 32-69 cm (1-2 feet) tail • 3-7 kg (7-15 lbs)
CAPTIVE HOUSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cage should be at least 6 x 6 x 6 feet (2 x 2 x 2 m). • Large open wire crate allowing good ventilation is adequate for indoor cages. • Coatis will dig or climb to escape; enclosure must have escape-proof wire mesh walls and a closed secured roof. • A concrete floor will prevent escape by digging and may be covered by sand, soil and vegetation. • Enclosure should be cleaned daily. • Access to clean water in a secured water dish to avoid tipping is necessary. • In general, females may be housed together whereas males should not. • Coatimundis may damage property or sustain injury from household hazards if allowed free roam of the house.
ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enclosure should contain branches and hollow logs large enough for climbing. • Hammocks or ledges should be provided for sleeping.
RESTRAINT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coatis are difficult to manually restrain; attempt restraint only for injection of medications and anesthesia. • Heavy leather gloves, towels, blankets and catch nets may be necessary.
ANESTHESIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhalation anesthesia is recommended. • If the coati can be restrained, general anesthesia should be given with a non-rebreathing circuit and a face mask. • Induction involves exposure to sevoflurane in a large cat induction chamber; coatis often wake up fast. • Anesthetic via IM injection is not recommended.

DIET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free-ranging coatimundis are omnivores and will scavenge for grubs, berries, edible roots and leaves. They also steal eggs from nesting birds, and catch birds, reptiles and small mammals. • In captivity, high-grade dog food kibble should be the primary diet with daily supplementation of fresh fruits and vegetables. Poultry, beef, eggs in small quantities, crickets and mealworms may be fed as treats. Obesity is often a problem if coatis are allowed free choice food. • Whole prey, such as rodents, day-old chicks, fish, frogs, crustaceans and mollusks, can provide essential nutrients, such as taurine.
SUITABILITY AS PETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coatimundis are gregarious, active and relatively simple to feed and house, especially if raised in close contact with humans. • Coatis may be trained to use a litter box, walk on a leash, and play games like fetch. • Coatis are often taken as pets when they are young and cute, but as these animals reach sexual maturity they may become unmanageable. • Coatis are often unpredictable, capable of inflicting injury and may carry zoonotic diseases. • They should not be recommended as pets. • Lifespan is 15-20 years.
BEHAVIOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligent and inquisitive • Generally social • Primarily diurnal • They are procyonids (same family as the raccoon). • Captive coatis may become aggressive if they are bored or do not receive enough social interaction. • Digging is part of the natural food gathering process and helps prevent nail overgrowth.
MOST COMMON DISORDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye injuries • Bite wounds • Foreign body impactions • Diabetes • Kidney disease (too much protein in diet) • Dental disease and fractured canine teeth • Frostbite (housed outdoors in cold climates) • Ectoparasites, especially ear mites (<i>Otodectes</i>) • Intestinal parasites • Fractures • Foot ulceration from "digging" at hard surface • Neoplasia (uterine adenocarcinoma, cutaneous lymphoma, lipoma) • Obesity • Metabolic bone disease
VACCINES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canine distemper/parvo/hepatitis: first vaccine at 6-8 weeks and every 3-4 weeks until 14 weeks of age; booster annually. Traditional MLV vaccines should not be used because they can cause post-vaccinal CDV encephalitis. Recombinant canary pox-vectored CDV is preferred. • If housed outdoors, leptospirosis may be suggested depending on location, possible exposure or outbreak: vaccination with commercial bacterin at 10-12 weeks of age; booster annually. • Rabies (for ferrets) if possible exposure or outbreak: first vaccine at 16 weeks; booster annually.
SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CAUTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some states or counties may not allow pet coatis. • Heartworm and flea preventives are recommended. • Coatis may bite or claw if stressed or frightened, and they have extremely long, sharp canine teeth. • They may transmit a number of zoonotic diseases.



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