Exotic Animal Medicine: Initial evaluation and Restraint
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I. The most important rule to remember: Good medicine is good medicine regardless of the species of animal!

II. Phone Triage
   A. Recommend an emergency exam if:
      1. Bleeding
      2. Trouble breathing
      3. Severe lethargy
      4. Vomiting
      5. Diarrhea
      6. Weakness, falling over
      7. Suspected fractures or limping
      8. Wounds – especially bite wounds
      9. Not eating
      10. Not drinking
      11. Seizures
      12. Eye disease
      13. Anytime the owner is concerned!
   B. Medical problems that require an exam but not as an emergency:
      1. Chronic medical problems without any emergent progression
      2. Dermatologic problems (Ectoparasites, feather picking)
   C. Special Exceptions
      1. Recommend an exam if
         a. Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, and Chinchillas
            i. Not eating
            ii. No stool in over 6 hours
            iii. ANY diarrhea
         b. All seizures
      2. May not need an exam:
         a. Rats - Red tears and nasal discharge is called epiphora; May be normal
         b. Fish (and often amphibians) - always recommend that the water condition be checked at their local aquarium store.
   D. Instructions to give the owner
      1. Bring in a carrier, box, or on a leash
      2. Drive slowly and carefully
      3. Avoid hypothermia – heat on in the car, wrap in a blanket or put in bedding
      4. Keep amphibians moist by wrapping in moist paper towels or towels soaked in distilled water or water from their enclosure

III. Triage
A. IF/Then scenarios
   1. If it’s not in a carrier or on a leash... Put the owner and the pet in an open exam room or bring the animal to the treatment area.
   2. If the animal is having trouble breathing... Place in an oxygen cage.
   3. If the animal is bleeding... Bring the animal to the treatment area and get a doctor or another technician to help you control the bleeding.
   4. If the animal is visibly stressed... Put in a quiet exam room or place in an oxygen cage. Avoid handling. Have a doctor evaluate immediately.

B. Stress!!!
   1. Most exotic animals are PREY species.
   2. Stress can make illness worse.
   3. Remove from noisy, hectic environments.
   4. Handle as little as possible but as much as you need to.

C. Benign neglect - A noninterference that is intended to benefit someone or something more than continual attention would

D. Heat support
   1. Hypothermia and circulatory shock:
      a. Circulating volume is shunted to vital organs to preserve their function.
      b. Blood is shunted away from extremities.
      c. Metabolism is decreased
         i. Lower oxygen and glucose requirements
         ii. mainly in the brain
   2. Active Heat should provided if a patient:
      a. Normal blood sugar
      b. Has adequate oxygen
      c. Circulating volume has been restored
   3. Passive heating measures are OK!!!
   4. Therapeutic Hypothermia
      a. Definition: also known as protective hypothermia, is a medical treatment lowers a patient’s body temperature in order to help reduce the risk of the ischemic injury to tissue following a period of insufficient blood flow
      b. Heat applied to extremities causes vasodilatation in that area. In the absence of normal blood volume (from dehydration, shock, etc) this can further exacerbate shock by decreasing blood supply to vital organs.

IV. Restraint of Small Mammals
   A. Rabbits
      1. Vertebral fractures!
      2. Improper Techniques: Ears, Scruff, Any lift without support under the hind legs
   B. Chinchillas, Guinea Pigs
1. Fur slip, fractured limbs, Dropping patients, proptosis in guinea pigs
2. Improper Techniques: Scruff, Tail

C. Ferrets, Small Rodents
   1. Fractures, Dropping
   2. Improper Techniques: Failure to provide restraint!

D. The Burrito
   1. Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Chinchillas, Small Rodents, Ferrets
   2. How to make a Burrito! – see video

E. The Football Carry - Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Chinchillas
F. The Scoop - Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Chinchillas
G. Scruff - Ferrets, small rodents
H. Small Mammal Radiographs

VI. Restraint of Birds
   A. Wing fractures
   B. Airway obstruction
      1. Tracheal rings are complete
      2. Never press down on the keel! Birds need to lift the keel to inhale.
   C. Reverse Birdie Burrito – see video
      1. Grab with a towel around the neck from the dorsum.
      2. Carefully drape the towel over the back/wings.
      3. Wrap around the ventral side to control the legs.
   D. Pigeons and Doves – ice cream cone Hold
   E. Waterfowl and Chickens – use a towel, control the head and neck and carry under your arm.
   F. Birds of Prey – Use leather gloves (gauntlets) to control the feet.
   G. Bird Radiographs

VII. Restraint of Reptiles and Amphibians
   A. Autonomy – losing the tail when handled
      1. Splits through the middle of a vertebrae and along the fascial planes of the muscle.
      2. Very little hemorrhage
   B. Turtles, Tortoises, and Terrapins
      1. Hamburger hold
      2. Elevated surfaces
   C. Lizards
      1. Hold over the head/neck and pelvis
      2. Control the tail
      3. Radiographs often require no restraint.
   D. Snakes
      1. Hold just behind the head
      2. Support the body weight
      3. 1 person for every 3-6 feet of snake.
      4. Consider special equipment, boards, tubes, hooks, tongs, bags, etc.
E. Amphibians
   1. Wear gloves rinsed in distilled water
   2. Use baggies, clear plastic containers

F. Fish restraint
   1. Keep in water as much as possible
   2. Wear gloves rinsed in distilled water

IX. Taking Vitals!!!
   A. Temperatures are generally not recommended with the exception of ferrets
   B. Heart rates
      1. Mammals and Birds – use stethoscope
      2. Reptiles, amphibians, fish - can be obtained with a Doppler if needed.
   C. Respiratory Rates - Especially for birds

X. References