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Book Review



Turner and McIlwraith's Techniques in Large Animal Surgery, Fifth Edition: A Book Review

Anderson Fernando de Souza* 

College of Agronomy and Veterinary, Santa Catarina State University, 2090 Luiz de Camões Avenue, Lages, Brazil

* **Corresponding author:** Anderson Fernando de Souza, College of Agronomy and Veterinary, Santa Catarina State University, 2090 Luiz de Camões Avenue, Lages, Brazil. Email: anderson.sji@hotmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This book review critically evaluates Turner and McIlwraith's Techniques in Large Animal Surgery, fifth Edition, highlighting its technical rigor, clinical applicability, and strong educational orientation. The review emphasizes the careful balance between retaining proven surgical techniques and integrating updated procedures, references, and expert contributions. Particular attention is given to the book's value in veterinary teaching and clinical training, underscoring its relevance for students, residents, and practicing large animal surgeons seeking a reliable and pedagogically sound surgical reference.

Keywords:

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1. Introduction

Turner and McIlwraith's Techniques in large animal surgery, 5th Edition stands as one of the most enduring and authoritative references in the field of large animal surgery. Since its earliest editions, this textbook has played a central role in the education of veterinary students and the daily practice of large animal surgeons. The current edition successfully maintains this tradition while incorporating carefully curated updates that reflect both the evolution of the discipline and the ongoing needs of contemporary veterinary education and clinical practice.

A defining strength of this textbook is its clear commitment to serving a dual audience including veterinary students in training and practicing large animal clinicians. The text is written in a didactic yet rigorous manner, allowing it to function simultaneously as a foundational teaching resource and a reliable reference in clinical settings. This balance is particularly valuable in academic environments, where students must develop not only technical proficiency but also a sound understanding of surgical principles and decision-making.

The fifth edition preserves the hallmark characteristics that have long defined this work. Surgical techniques are

presented in a logical, anatomically grounded sequence, encompassing preoperative planning, patient preparation, surgical execution, and postoperative care. Importantly, the editorial approach emphasizes the retention of "tried-and-true" procedures with established reliability, while deliberately removing outdated techniques and incorporating new procedures supported by current knowledge. This careful curation reinforces the book's credibility and ensures that readers are exposed to methods that are both effective and relevant.

From a technical perspective, the descriptions of surgical procedures are precise, practical, and clinically oriented. The text avoids unnecessary complexity while providing sufficient detail to guide safe and reproducible execution of techniques. This approach is particularly well suited to the realities of large animal surgery, where procedures are often performed under variable conditions and where adaptability is essential. Rather than assuming idealized environments, the book reflects the practical constraints encountered in teaching hospitals, ambulatory practice, and production animal systems.

The educational value of the fifth edition is further

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strengthened by its consistent use of illustrations. This element simplify complex information, enhance spatial understanding of anatomical regions, and facilitate rapid consultation in clinical contexts. For instructors, they represent effective teaching tools for lectures, case-based discussions, and surgical planning. For students and residents, they serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and the operative field.

Another notable strength of this edition is the collaborative nature of its revision. Contributions from authors with specific expertise in anesthesia and fluid therapy, dental surgery, and upper respiratory surgery have resulted in chapters that are not only thoroughly updated, but also consistent in depth, clarity, and clinical relevance. This multi-expert effort enhances the scientific reliability of the text and reflects the increasingly integrated nature of modern large animal surgery. The comprehensive revision of references across chapters further underscores the editors' commitment to accuracy and evidence-based practice.

As a surgeon with a dedication to veterinary education, the pedagogical coherence of this textbook deserves particular emphasis. The narrative consistently prioritizes fundamental surgical principles, such as tissue handling, anatomical respect, and procedural planning, over step-by-step protocols. This approach encourages critical thinking and prepares learners to adapt techniques to individual cases, a skill that is essential for professional maturity in large animal surgery.

The fifth edition also reflects the broader evolution of the field, incorporating advances in instrumentation, anesthesia, and perioperative management while remaining grounded in established surgical philosophy. Although certain emerging areas, such as minimally invasive techniques, may continue to expand in future editions, the current text successfully balances innovation with the preservation of reliable surgical methods. This balance ensures continuity with prior editions while clearly demonstrating thoughtful progression.

When compared with other standard references in large animal surgery, such as Equine Surgery (5th edition) and Farm Animal Surgery (2nd edition), Turner and McIlwraith's Techniques in Large Animal Surgery occupies a distinct and complementary role. While these texts function primarily as comprehensive textbooks, providing in-depth discussion of surgical techniques and extensive review of the literature, Hendrickson and Baird's book deliberately adopts a more concise and pragmatic approach. This practical orientation makes it particularly suitable for veterinary students at their first exposure to surgical concepts and for practicing surgeons seeking rapid consultation. Rather than competing, these books complement one another, with Turner and McIlwraith's text offering an accessible foundation and the others providing deeper technical exploration when required.

One potential limitation of the book relates to its primary use of schematic illustrations to depict surgical procedures. While these drawings are of high quality and extremely effective for clarifying anatomy and sequential steps, they may offer a simplified representation of the operative field. The inclusion of selected intraoperative photographs could further enhance the reader's ability to translate these concepts into real clinical scenarios, where tissue

appearance, bleeding, and visual complexity are inherent to surgery. Such visual complementarity would be particularly valuable for trainees transitioning from theoretical understanding to hands-on surgical practice.

In future editions, this textbook could further expand its scope by incorporating more selected minimally invasive techniques, reflecting their growing role in large animal surgery. In addition, the integration of complementary digital resources, such as online video demonstrations, could enhance the educational experience and support skill acquisition. These developments would naturally build upon the book's strong pedagogical foundation while preserving its practical and accessible character.

In conclusion, Turner and McIlwraith's Techniques in Large Animal Surgery, 5th Edition remains an indispensable reference for large animal surgeons, educators, and advanced students. Its combination of technical rigor, clinical applicability, and educational clarity reinforces its status as a benchmark textbook in the field. More than a collection of surgical techniques, the book promotes a principled and disciplined approach to large animal surgery, making it particularly valuable for those committed to excellence in both clinical practice and veterinary teaching.

Declarations

Competing interests

The author declared no competing interests.

Authors' contributions

Anderson Fernando de Souza was solely responsible for writing the present article. The final edition was approved by the author.

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The authors have made necessary ethical considerations, including plagiarism, consent to publish, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy. The author declared that no artificial intelligence tools were used in the writing of this manuscript.

Availability of data and materials

This is a book review and all related data are presented in this manuscript.