PREFACE

Although microbes have been on the earth for millions of years, shaping human and animal evolution, it was not until the mid-1800s that Louis Pasteur developed the germ theory of disease. He demonstrated the principles of immunity and introduced a scientific basis for the prevention of disease. Since that time, our understanding of infectious agents has increased dramatically. Despite this fact, infectious disease is still an integral part of our lives and those of our animal companions. We as veterinarians still struggle to make proper diagnoses in many instances and to institute effective therapies. It is almost certain that over the ensuing decades and centuries, scientific discoveries will be made that expose new infectious agents that we are unaware of today. The fight to recognize infectious disease and successfully treat it, in humans or animals, will be an endless battle with new horizons constantly emerging.

If the eye is the window to the soul, it is also the window to the rest of the body. Veterinarians who routinely practice ophthalmic examination have a unique opportunity to visualize lesions that may be representative of those elsewhere in the body. Successfully recognizing the presence and severity of ocular disease is often a critical part of managing a systemic disease.

The goal of this issue of The Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice is to bring together the latest information on infectious agents of cats and dogs that commonly affect the eye and the rest of the body. The authors have made every attempt to cover the presenting systemic clinical signs, ocular signs, available diagnostic tests, and therapeutic options.

I am very grateful to the contributing authors of this issue of The Veterinary Clinics of North America. All responded enthusiastically, despite their busy schedules, when invited to contribute an article. It is my sincere hope that the information contained in this issue will be of benefit to the clinician in stimulating thought about infectious disease as it relates to the eye, and in helping the clinician to make accurate diagnoses and appropriate treatment choices for our small animal companions.

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