

vaccine uptake with disastrous consequences. To be truly useful for parents, such a book should cover the range of vaccines available, pointing out why each is necessary in terms of the risk imposed by infection and disease, the degree of protection provided, important side effects, safety concerns and contraindications, and the dosing schedule. This should be provided in a format accessible for all parents, especially in terms of readability.

This book provides all of the requisite information and more. Beginning with an explanation of basic immune system functioning as well as the systems in place in Canada to assure vaccine safety, it looks at individual infectious diseases in detail, providing information about their agents and modes of transmission, the associated illnesses and their management, and what vaccines are available, including how they are produced, their side effects, and evidence of their effectiveness. Arguments about the general safety of vaccines are provided throughout, with examples of how disease can spread when vaccine uptake decreases. An extensive "Question and Answer" section and a list of other resources are provided at the end.

Unfortunately, all of this detail comes at the expense of accessibility. The book is dense and lengthy, and the reading level is extremely high. Much technical language is used; although the authors attempt to clarify certain concepts with brief explanations, most lay readers will find this book difficult. For this reason, I would not recommend it to parents.

—Donald B. Langille MD MHS

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## Rainbows in washtubs

*Diagnostic mysteries in agromedicine*

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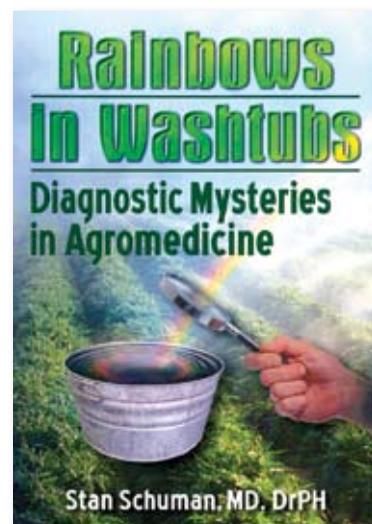
**OVERALL RATING** Good

**STRENGTHS** Easy and enjoyable read; provides a useful approach to agromedicine

**WEAKNESSES** Not a practical reference guide

**AUDIENCE** Anyone interested in the links between agriculture and health

*Rainbows in Washtubs. Diagnostic Mysteries in Agromedicine* is a reflective collection of fascinating agromedicine vignettes. Dr Schuman, a pediatrician who became an epidemiologist and later an investigative public health physician, presents a variety of clinical challenges that are solved as clinical riddles—almost like a rural practice "CSI." The first story, "Finding Rainbows in Washtubs," begins with an infant, a 6-year-old, a 9-year-old, and their parents presenting to a rural doctor in an emergency



department with a variety of symptoms: stiff neck, ataxia, muscular twitching, blurred vision, cramps, and diarrhea. The mystery is later solved on a public health home investigation that reveals a rainbow in the washtub, which is actually the effect of a toxic oil-soluble organophosphate pesticide. Another vignette traces an outbreak of pneumonia in schoolchildren to playground soil contaminated with histoplasmosis spores. And yet another links a rash of rashes in floral shops to a new, highly allergic imported plant that causes severe contact dermatitis. This book is an enjoyable read and, collectively, the vignettes present an approach to agromedicine challenges that will complement reference textbooks, especially for physicians who care for rural families.

—James Rourke MD CCFP(EM) MCISc

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