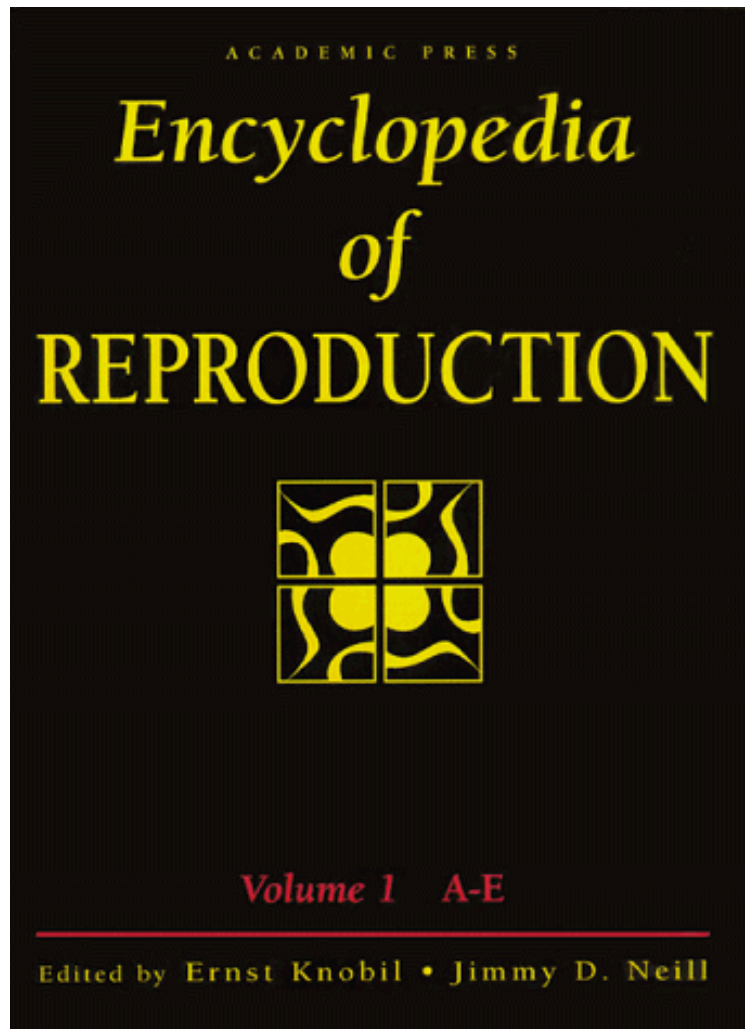


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## Encyclopedia of Reproduction, Four-Volume Set

*Michael A. Skinner*

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The more than 550 articles in the Encyclopedia of Reproduction encompass every aspect of the biology of reproduction throughout the entire animal kingdom, covering invertebrates to humans. Each article includes a glossary and an introduction, as well as illustrations and a bibliography. Extensive aids to the reader are provided through a detailed subject index, cross references to related articles, and an index of articles by category. The Encyclopedia is designed to answer any and all questions related to this fundamentally important field, in non-mammalian as well as

mammalian systems, from the most basic to the latest advances in assisted reproduction in humans. Key Features\* The first and only work to cover all aspects of reproduction in the animal kingdom, including humans and other primates, mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibia, fish, and invertebrates\* Four-volume set with topics arranged A to Z for easy reference\* More than 550 separate articles, all commissioned for this work\* Editorial direction by Ernst Knobil and Jimmy D. Neill, noted reproductive biologists and co-editors of the standard reference in the field\* Distinguished Editorial Board composed of 15 experts and prominent scientists serving as Associate Editors.\* Articles by more than 700 authors from leading institutions of reproductive science around the world\* 1350 figures and 300 tables complement the text of the articles\* 3000 glossary entries explain key terms\* Further Reading lists appear at the end of each entry\* Extensive cross-referencing system links related articles\* Large 8 1/2 x 11 page size, easy-to-read double-column format

From The New England Journal of MedicineThe word "encyclopedia," according to one dictionary, is derived from Greek words meaning to "encircle education." The title of the four volumes reviewed here thus claims to encircle what is known about reproduction. Certainly, these volumes draw a very large circle, and within its confines there is a fascinating range of topics. For example, in the first volume, one finds discussions of reproduction in elephants and *Caenorhabditis elegans* -- the former, an impractical model but a grand animal fascinating to everyone, and the latter, a lowly worm that has rewarded numerous investigators in multiple areas of basic biologic science. In another volume, one learns that locusts, behaving in their legendary plague-like manner, are described by the misleadingly affable term "gregarious," which among other things means living in large groups. The next time I participate in the use of oxytocin to induce labor on our labor-and-delivery floor, I will remember that the same molecule induces egg laying in gravid reptile uteri. In the winter, stallions have decreased semen quality and sexual interest, but in horses as in humans, the variation in male sexual interest seems to have much less of an effect on reproduction than female cyclicity does. Clinical subjects such as postdate (post-term) pregnancy and postpartum depression are found next to the discussion of Porifera. Porifera, or sponges, it is fascinating to learn, engage in both internal and external fertilization and may disperse either male gametes or unfertilized female gametes into the environment. An article on reproduction and protozoa immediately precedes the article on pseudocyesis. These juxtapositions result, of course, from that fact that, as in most encyclopedias, the articles in this one are arranged in alphabetical order. This arrangement makes it fun to read straight through one of these volumes, since one never knows what will come next, but it does place a premium on knowing the right term to start with if one is seeking specific information. The editors have addressed this problem by including an extensive index and a list of the titles of articles arranged by subject matter. This list immediately follows the table of contents and allows readers to find articles on aspects of the subjects in which they are interested. The idea of encircling a subject has a negative connotation, which is that one only encircles it, instead of exploring it in detail. In areas in which I have some knowledge, I found that many of the articles lack depth. It is hard to know how much of a criticism this constitutes, however, since any effort to achieve completeness would have resulted in a library of volumes rather than four, with the inclusion of much material that would have been almost immediately outdated. The material included in these four volumes will last somewhat longer, but as I carried them into my office and placed them on my desk beside the computer, which not only encircles but bores into any area of knowledge, I wondered what the place of four volumes that will soon be out of date could be in this new world of electronic publication and access. For me, a lifetime lover of books, one answer is suggested by a striking omission. I found no discussion of ethical issues in an arena that seems to generate myriad ethical questions. Superficially, it has always seemed paradoxical to me that reproductive biology should give rise to so many ethical questions, since Mother Nature's reproductive ethics seem so simple: if it gets you into the next generation, it's good, and if not, it isn't. But as these volumes make abundantly clear, that apparent simplicity conceals the fact that Mother Nature, closely studied, tells us that there is an incredible diversity of correct answers. ed by Tim H. Parmlley, M.D. Copyright 1999 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved. The New England Journal of Medicine is a registered trademark of the MMS. "...an encyclopedic reference work such as this is needed and welcomed... A wide variety of illustrations including tables, graphs, drawings, and excellent photographs are well utilized in each entry. This encyclopedia provides an attractive, comprehensive review of clinical and basic science involved in reproductive biology. It assembles a vast amount of information into an extremely well researched four-volume set which is unique to the literature."-- DOODY'S PUBLISHING REVIEWSAbout the AuthorErnst Knobil, The University of Texas, Houston, Houston, Texas, U.S.A. Jimmy D. Neill, The University of Alabama, Birmingham, Alabama, U.S.A.