

A Great Reptile Vet

By Russ Case

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Dr. Douglas Mader – REPTILES magazine's "Vet Q&A" author -- was recently awarded the Alumni Achievement Award from the University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine. Photo courtesy Douglas Mader, DVM. I wanted to give a shout-out to Doug Mader, MS, DVM, DABVP and REPTILES magazine's own "Vet Q&A" columnist. Doug was recently given top honors from his alma mater, University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine, in the form of the university's Alumni Achievement Award. The award was given for Doug's contributions to the welfare of animals as a teacher, researcher, author and practitioner. This is the highest award the school can bestow.

To quote the school's website: "Since 1948, the School of Veterinary Medicine has been serving the public through statewide teaching, research and service programs benefiting animal health, public health and environmental health in California and beyond." The UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine is recognized as one of the top veterinary schools in the world, and they don't hand this award out to just anybody.

I got to know Doug when we were lining up columnists for REPTILES in 1993. He is one of the magazine's original columnists – one of the rare ones who have been with the magazine since its very first issue (the other is Bill Love, who writes the "Herpetological Queries" column). His contributions to REPTILES have always been appreciated, and I'm very glad to have such a respected veterinary authority writing for the magazine. As the reptile hobby has grown over the years more veterinarians are treating reptiles, but Doug was one of the first to earn a reputation in this area.

In addition to writing for REPTILES, as well as many professional journals and other literary outlets, Doug edited and co-authored a landmark reference on the subject of reptile medicine, Reptile Medicine and Surgery, published by W.B. Saunders. There have been two editions, the first in 1996 and the second in 2005.

Doug owns the Marathon Veterinary Hospital in Marathon, Fla., and is well-known for his work with sea turtles. He's a frequent lecturer, too.

Perhaps more important than any of these accomplishments, years ago, when Doug owned the Long Beach Animal Hospital in Long Beach, Calif., he treated one of my bearded dragons for an infected tail. Unfortunately the tail had to be amputated, which of course meant that particular dragon had to be called Stumpy from then on. And as if losing his tail wasn't embarrassment enough, once it was gone, Stumpy's hemipenes would not remain in their proper place within his body. So Stumpy got "fixed," too, giving his nickname double meaning. Boy, did Stumpy get more than he bargained for that day.

Doug once let me observe a surgery he was performing on a tortoise – I forget the species -- to remove some bladder stones. It was fascinating and, well, really gross. Of course you should realize this critical comment is coming from someone who is not very well versed in the field of veterinary surgery. My main memory is of things that looked like brown golf balls being extracted from the greenish brown goopy insides of the unconscious tortoise. Suffice to say, though, that the tortoise came through with flying colors.

If you live in the vicinity of Marathon, Fla., and are looking for a qualified reptile veterinarian, you will find none better than Dr. Douglas Mader (and he does treat other animals, too). And if you ever have a question about reptile medical issues, you can write to him in care of REPTILES magazine. Keep in mind, though, that because of the time element involved, if you have a reptile that needs immediate veterinary attention, don't wait for a letter to be answered by Doug in the magazine. Take your pet to a qualified reptile veterinarian immediately. I guarantee Doug would tell you the same thing.

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