

TOOLS TRADE of the

A lively debate over forceps; a radio-surgical unit perfect for smaller patients, and more this month ...



DeBakey forceps

by Dr Selena Steiner, Cleveland Veterinary Clinic, Cleveland, QLD

I really didn't know about DeBakeys until I did a dental course in Melbourne about 10 years ago. They were promoting the use of either DeBakeys or Adson-Brown forceps. My partner [Dr Seungho Kim—see the next tool] is also a vet and we have this ongoing debate about which is better. I'm sure he only likes Adson-Browns because they're a less expensive option.

What's good about it

Not only are DeBakeys more elegant and beautiful than Adson-Browns, they revolutionised tissue handling for me. The forceps have two rows of very small fine teeth that are very gentle on fragile tissue. They work particularly well in the mouth and in the abdomen when performing surgery. As they cause little trauma, the healing is more rapid.

They are perfect when I'm doing a biopsy of a very small lesion and only want to take a tiny piece of tissue. When I was a young, gung-ho vet, I used to send off pieces of tissue for histopathology and they would report back there was lots of crushing from the forceps. It's a disaster when the report can't tell you anything because the sample was too crushed.

So that's why I like DeBakey forceps. They are a simple piece of technology that handles tiny pieces of tissue very gently. It's only a small thing but it can make a huge difference.

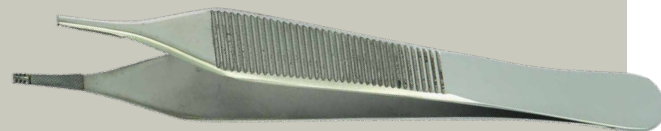
I have the whole range of DeBakey forceps including several pairs of each model. I ensure my name is on them before they get autoclaved. I have also populated many kits in my practice with them.

What's not so good

Nothing. I've used lots of different forceps in the past but these are, by far, the best. I would like to be buried with my DeBakey forceps.

Where did you get it

Sound Veterinary Equipment
(www.soundveterinary.com.au). ➤



Adson-Brown forceps

by Dr Seungho Kim, Central New Farm Veterinary Surgery, Brisbane, QLD

Adson-Brown forceps have a really nice grip but for delicate surgery, like the intestine or the eye, I prefer using DeBakey forceps. The thing is, I'm not obsessed with one brand of forceps like some other veterinarians. Some vets always choose top-of-the-range instruments and, even if they only need to purchase one, they go ahead and buy three.

What's good about it

Adson-Brown forceps have a good grip, the tissue doesn't slip and, if used gently, they don't cause any trauma, crushing or bruising. They are really good tools for general surgery like desexing.

They are gentler than rat-tooth forceps but can still adequately hold skin or tissue. I have tried rat-tooth forceps on my skin and it was really painful because the teeth are so sharp and pointy. I use Adson-Brown forceps for the majority of my surgery.

I'll admit that DeBakeys are better than Adson-Brown forceps. They handle better, the action is very smooth and the grip is gentler. However, they're about 14 times more expensive than Adson-Browns. They're so expensive, it's hard to justify putting DeBakey forceps into every kit in a veterinary practice. If a practice can afford it, that's fine. But if money is tight then the Adson-Browns are good all-round general forceps for a fraction of the cost.

What's not so good

The forceps can be difficult to clean. Even after they've gone through the autoclave, the fine teeth can still have a little residue on them. However, a quick scrub is all that's needed.

Where did you get it

VetQuip (www.vetquip.com.au). ➤

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Ellman Surgitron radiosurgical unit

by Dr Philip Sacks, Bird Vet Melbourne, Burwood, VIC

We're an avian specialist practice that performs a lot of avian surgery. We aim for relatively bloodless surgery and this unit is one of my favourite surgical tools. It's able to cut and coagulate with minimal lateral damage to the surrounding tissue and limit blood loss. It's the first instrument we set up for avian surgeries.

What's good about it

One of the biggest causes of death in avian anaesthesia is blood loss. Ideally, we want a bloodless field as many of the smaller patients only have a few millilitres of blood. In many cases, the blood vessels are so tiny it's impossible to put a ligature around them.

The radiosurgical unit can be set to cut and coagulate simultaneously. This unit has improved our surgical success rate and made it possible to do things we could never do in the past. Whether removing a lump or repairing a fracture, whenever potential bleeding is involved, we'll use this unit.

There are different ways to use the Ellman unit but I mainly use the bipolar function. It looks like very fine forceps that, when touched together, cut and coagulate. Our Ellman Surgitron is about 27 years old and a real workhorse. In an avian specialist practice, it's a really indispensable tool.

What's not so good

Our unit has a foot switch that's very functional. However, the newer models have a hand switch that allows the veterinarian to work more ergonomically.

Where did you get it

From Ellman USA at an avian conference in Hawaii. New units are available from Medtel (www.medtel.com.au). ➤



Motic microscope

by Dr Barry Odesnik, Vital Vet, Perth, WA

I've worked in many practices that don't have the benefit of a good quality microscope and this discourages the clinician from using this under-utilised and potentially helpful tool. I purchased my Motic BA300 when I started this practice seven years ago.

What's good about it

A good microscope improves your diagnostic skills and makes you a better practitioner. I use it every day for such things as evaluating skin cytology, fine needle aspirate cytology, urinalysis, faecal cytology, faecal wet preparations, joint fluid analysis and assessment of other body fluids.

Doing your own microscopy doesn't eliminate the need for further advanced diagnostic work like histopathology but it gives you a good idea of what you're dealing with, and allows you to make better decisions in terms of surgery and treatment. I think most vets don't do their own microscope work simply because they don't have the right equipment.

It's very important to have a microscope that's binocular. Monocular microscopes are very uncomfortable and don't allow for a good interpretation of the image. Motic microscopes are also ergonomically designed so they're easy to use and don't cause fatigue. You can spend a fair amount of time at the eyepiece when dealing with lots of slides.

There are a range of different lenses that give different magnification. I use 4X, 10X, 40X and 100X oil. It's important to have the microscope serviced regularly but overall the BA300 has been virtually problem free.

Some microscopes also have a camera port. A microscope camera allows owners and staff members to see the image you're viewing in real time or capture a still image.

What's not so good

The purchase price may be a limiting factor in that it could steer prospective users away from a purchase. However, the cost is not prohibitive and, over time, it will pay for itself again and again.

Where did you get it

Perth Scientific Equipment
(www.perthscientific.com.au). ➤