ETHNOVETERINARY TREATMENTS IN ROMAN ANTIQUITY: CATO THE ELDER’S VETERINARY REMEDIES*

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ABSTRACT
This article deals with the animal therapies in Cato, De Agricultura, in an attempt to gauge the level of Roman veterinary care in the 2nd century BC, the earliest period documented in our literary sources. This aspect of Cato’s work, until now neglected or treated in a cursory fashion, is discussed in its various facets: its characteristics, magical aspects, medicinal substances and preventive measures. In this way the article also contributes to the emerging field of ethnoveterinary research.

In comparison with the interest shown in Graeco-Roman human medicine, the field of animal health care in antiquity is still relatively neglected. The last two decades, however, have seen the publication of several important books and articles which have enlarged our understanding of the practice of ancient veterinary medicine.¹ Most recent scholarly activity has been directed at

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veterinary terminology and, in particular, at Pelagonius’ *Ars Veterinaria*, the earliest monograph on hippiatric medicine to survive from antiquity. Although this text has come down to us in a revised form,² it is likely that the original work was written in the later 4th century.³ The *Ars Veterinaria* was an important source for another Latin veterinary treatise, the *Mуломедицина* of Vegetius, which was probably composed at some time in the period between 373 and 450 AD.⁴ Vegetius also drew on the late-Latin *Mуломедицина* Chironis, which must pre-date the Vegetian compilation, but it is not certain by how much.⁵

These three treatises, therefore, together with Palladius’ *Liber de Veterinaria Medicina*, provide evidence for veterinary knowledge in the Late Empire. I propose to gauge the level of Roman veterinary care in the earliest period documented in our literary sources, the 2nd century BC. I shall revisit some passages contained in Cato’s *De Agricultura*, partly to ascertain the characteristics of animal health care at this time and partly as a

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¹ See Fischer, ‘Pelagonius on horse medicine’ (note 1) 290-94; Adams (note 1) 8, 150, 171-80, 188-97.
² Adams (note 1) 3.
⁴ Fischer, ‘Ancien veterinary medicine’ (note 1) 209; Adams (note 1) 6 n. 29.
means of measuring the technical achievements attained by some aspects of Roman veterinary practice some five hundred years later.

As a compilation of information useful to the land-owning paterfamilias, the De Agricultura includes instructions on how to safeguard or restore the health of the human beings and animals in his care. Cato is one of several ancient writers to include information on animal ailments and cures in works devoted primarily to other topics. Both the medical and veterinary therapies he records are rooted firmly in the tradition of folk medicine, which developed on an empirical basis as people discovered through trial and error which herbs and other natural products had therapeutic value. The practices and beliefs that resulted from popular experience did not depend on any systematic pharmacological screening or controlled clinical trials, but many of the officinal substances constituting the pharmacopeia of the ancients are still used by herbalists for human and animal patients. In modern 'scientific' medicine, the pharmaceutical industry has in many cases merely extracted the curative elements from plants and presented them in a stronger form.

Cato's remedies and prophylactic treatments for human beings have been the subject of extensive recent study. The same, however, cannot be

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6 For example, Columella's De Re Rustica, Pliny's Naturalis Historia, the Opus Agriculturae of Palladius and the Byzantine collection, the Geoponica.
8 M.A. van Straten, 'Recent studies of the therapeutic value of herbs', Herbal Review 3 (1978) 9-11, outlines the impact of the modern drug industry on pharmacognosy. For a comparison of the drugs found in the Hippocratic Corpus with those listed in modern pharmacognosy guides, see J.M. Riddle, 'Folk tradition and folk medicine: recognition of drugs in classical antiquity', in J. Scarborough (ed.), Folklore and Folk Medicines (Madison 1987) 33-61.
said of his animal therapies. If featuring at all in discussions of Cato’s approach to medicine, they are mentioned only in passing. In histories of veterinary medicine, too, they receive only cursory treatment, as if scholars were anxious to proceed as speedily as possibly to explore writers who bear a closer resemblance to the modern idea of the veterinary specialist. This is certainly a legitimate and understandable viewpoint. But an extreme position is adopted by E. Leclainche, who devotes a few lines of comment to Cato’s treatment of animal and human ailments, remarking that Cato concerns himself with the collection of incantatory formulae and ‘des recettes populaires sans intérêt.’

But Cato’s remedies are certainly not without interest, and I shall examine the broad characteristics of Cato’s remedies, their magical aspects and the stock of substances that Cato employs in his treatments. Reproduced in the Appendix to this article are seven passages from the De Agricultura relating to the care of cattle and sheep which form the basis of my discussion.

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It should be noted that the kind of farming in which Cato is primarily interested is not stock-raising, but the production of wine and olive oil. Cattle, sheep and other animals are envisaged as having an ancillary function. For an olive orchard of 240 iugera Cato recommends 3 pairs of oxen, 4 asses (3 to transport manure and one to work the mill) and 100 sheep, presumably to graze on the land, while a vineyard of 100 iugera requires

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11 For example, Scarborough (note 9) 16-17; Boscherini, ‘Termini medici’ (note 9) 40-42.


13 E. Leclainche, Histoire de la médecine vétérinaire (Toulouse 1936) 46.

14 A.E. Astin, Cato the Censor (Oxford 1978) 189.
only one pair of oxen and 3 asses (Agr. 11.1). Both passages include a swineherd in the list of necessary personnel, from which we may infer that pigs are expected to be kept.

The majority of Cato’s animal treatments (Agr. 70, 72, 73, 96 and 103) are preventive. This characteristic is consistent with the concern Cato expresses elsewhere, always with an eye to the profitable management of his assets, to maintain land, farm implements and livestock in optimal condition. He advises treating the stockmen indulgently, so as to encourage them to look after their charges well (Agr. 5.6), and instructs that good care be taken of the animals’ hooves (Agr. 5.7, presumably as a precautionary measure against infections and to enable the speedy detection of injuries). Agr. 72 recommends applying a protective coating of pitch to oxen’s hooves,15 to prevent their being worn down or otherwise damaged by contact with the hard, stony surface of a road. Only in two passages does he address the problems of animals already ailing, afflicted by illnesses with unspecified symptoms (Agr. 71) and by snakebite (Agr. 102). In Agr. 71 there is no description of symptoms and no attempt at diagnosis. From the handful of remedies given, it seems that in addition to snakebite, common problems were poor appetite (Agr. 103), skin disorders, ticks and other external parasites (Agr. 96). The instruction to have clean water for cattle to drink in summer (Agr. 73) implies an awareness of the hazards to health presented by polluted water. From the inclusion in the prescription recorded in Agr. 70 and 71 of large quantities of garlic, which possesses vermifugal properties when taken internally (see below, p. 144 with note 32), it may be inferred

15 In company with Thielscher (note 10) 278-79 and Önnerfors ‘Das medizinische Latein’ (note 1) 347, 351 and 353 n. 184, I take cornua infima (Agr. 72) to mean ‘the bottom of the hooves’, pace Boscherini Lingua e scienza (note 9) 58-62, who states that the term indicates ‘the base of the horns’. Boscherini argues that Cato’s instruction in Agr. 72 is an example of a magical therapy based on the doctrine of sympathy, whereby it is believed that treatment applied to the horns will benefit the hooves, constituted as they are of horny matter. But examination of passages cited as parallels (for example, Aristotle, HA 595b14-16, 604a15-17; Geop. 7.9; Plin. NH 11.127, 28.166) fail to offer irrefutable support. D.W. Thompson, for example, in J.A. Smith & W.D. Ross (eds), The Works of Aristotle, Vol. 4 (Oxford 1910) ad locc., translates τὰ κέφαλα and τὰυ κέφαλα as ‘the horny parts’ (sc. of the hooves). Regarding Geop. 17.9, S. Georgoudi, Des chevaux et des boufs dans le monde grec (Paris/Athens 1990) 218 and 285 n. 58, argues that τὰ κέφαλα designates the hooves. Önnerfors ‘Das medizinische Latein’ (note 1) 351 supposes that, while the contexts of Plin. NH 11.127 and 28.166 (both of which must be derived from Cato, Agr. 72) require cornua to mean ‘horns’, Pliny has misunderstood his source.
that livestock were often infested with intestinal worms.\textsuperscript{16}

The magico-religious aspects that characterise much of Roman folk medicine are prominent in these passages.\textsuperscript{17} Agr. 70 and 71 provide evidence of collection ritual, of which some 40 instances are described in Roman writers.\textsuperscript{18} Here, the prescribed substances must be gathered, prepared and administered \textit{sublimiter}, whatever this problematic term may signify.\textsuperscript{19} Both the human caregiver and the bovine patient must assume this position. Whether 'standing upright' or 'without making contact with the earth' is meant, the ritual posture adopted is believed to add its magical powers to the efficacy of the remedy.

In Agr. 71, the animal must be dosed on an empty stomach. But while it is reasonable to suppose that the treatment might be more efficacious if administered when the animal's stomach was empty, in this chapter and in the previous one, this pre-condition applies to the caregiver as well. The requirement points both to the magical powers associated with fasting,\textsuperscript{20} as well as to a belief in sympathetic magic. In primitive medicine, the server shares the conditions of treatment with the patient. Parallels are provided by Pliny, \textit{NH} 26.93, describing a treatment in which a fasting, naked maiden is required to poultice the abscess of a fasting patient, while Pliny, \textit{NH} 30.76 states that varicose veins can be prevented from developing in children if their legs were rubbed with lizard's blood, but that both the children and the rubber must be fasting (cf. also Marc. \textit{Med.} 15.11).

The fact that the ingredients prescribed in Agr. 70 are listed in twelve categories of three items each, in a treatment requiring that the drench thus compounded should be divided into three equal parts and administered

\textsuperscript{16} Later writers mention garlic as an ingredient for healthy cattle: for example, Col. 6.4.2; Pallad. 14.4.2. See L. Bodson, 'Ancient views on pests and parasites of livestock', \textit{Argos} 10 (1994) 303-10.

\textsuperscript{17} See W.H.S. Jones, 'Ancient Roman folk medicine', \textit{JHM} 17 (1957) 459-72.


\textsuperscript{19} I have followed the majority of English-speaking scholars in translating \textit{sublimiter} as 'standing upright'. E. Goldman, '\textit{Sublimiter}', \textit{AJPh} 66 (1940) 66-68, however, argues that the term means 'without making contact with the earth', that is, ox and attendant stand on a layer of stones or bricks or on planks of wood, thus insulating themselves from contact with the earth. Either significance implies belief in the magical character of the position of patient and caregiver.

\textsuperscript{20} See Adams (note 1) 20-24, 29-30.
over three days, indicates a belief in the magical powers of both the number 12 (cf. Hes. Op. 750-52) and the number 3. Furthermore, when the eleventh and twelfth ingredients, the three pieces of burning charcoal and the three sextarii of wine, are compounded with the other ten, what takes place has a magical significance. The wine will extinguish the burning charcoal, an action symbolising the dousing by the remedy of any incipient fever present in the animal. Finally, the snakeskin prescribed in Agr. 73 as an ingredient in a general tonic to be given in summer is widely recognised as a magical symbol of regeneration.

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I turn now to the individual substances of Cato’s veterinary pharmacopoeia, to their expected therapeutic properties, as far as these may be deduced from comments in other writers, and to the question of their actual efficacy, as established by modern pharmacognosy. The prophylactic tonic set out in Agr. 70 is remarkable for the large number of substances prescribed, twelve in all. The ‘blunderbuss’ character of this treatment is replicated in countless later medical and veterinary remedies, where many medicaments are used in an effort to find at least one efficacious substance. It is noteworthy, too, that almost all the ingredients in Cato’s pharmacopoeia are foodstuffs forming part of the normal diet, suggesting that anything edible was regarded as a potential remedy. All the ingredients, including the snakeskin mentioned in Agr. 73, could be gathered freely on the estate of Cato’s paterfamilias or found in his store cupboard.

Salt, the first substance in the prescription, was widely employed as an ingredient in both human and veterinary medicine. Pliny notes that salt encourages appetite in livestock (NH 31.88, 98), an observation consistent with modern opinion, and that taken in wine, it repels various kinds of

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22 Thorndike (note 21) 170 n. 1.
23 Jones (note 17) 461-62.
25 Plin. NH 31.98-103 lists the medicinal uses of salt.
worms (NH 31.102). He advises that bay leaves,27 chewed and swallowed, cure coughs and asthma (NH 23.152-58), and that a decoction relieves intestinal pain (NH 23.157), while modern herbalists make use of their digestive, antiseptic and carminative properties.28 Leeks, the first of the alliaceous plants mentioned in Agr. 70, taken internally, were believed to cure an inveterate cough (Plin. NH 20.44; Veg. Mul. 2.132.8).29 Leek juice stemmed internal bleeding (Plin. NH 20.44; Pelag. 304; Veg. Mul. 2.77; Hipp. Par. 435). Among the claims made by Pliny for garlic and great-headed garlic30 were that garlic keeps scorpions and serpents away by the smell and cures snakebite (NH 20.50), expels tapeworms and other internal parasites (NH 20.54), prevents pip in chickens and helps pack-animals to pass urine without pain (NH 20.57). These beliefs are translated into practical application in prescriptions for urinary difficulties in animals (Veg. Mul. 1.61.1; 2.79.15, respiratory difficulties (Veg. Mul. 1.134.7) and coughs (Veg. Mul. 2.134.6; 3.9.1). As for great-headed garlic, it is interesting to note that in the eleven ancient testimonia that cite the plant as an officinal substance, it is of specifically veterinary use in ten of them.31

The therapeutic value of garlic is nowadays well established.32 Garlic contains an antibiotic essential oil consisting of allicin, diallyl sulphide and various enzymes including alliinase. It is antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, functions as a febrifuge and vermifuge, helps to protect against heart disease by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and assists in the treatment

27 Plin. NH 32.152-58 lists the medicinal properties of bay leaves and berries.
31 Cato, Agr. 70.1, 71; Col. 6.4.2; Garg. Mart. Curae bouni 1, 3; Pallad. 14.3.5, 14.4.2; Mul. Chir. 199, 204; Veg. Mul. 1.18. The eleventh testimony, Garg. Mart. Med. 39 (Ulpicum indigestibile est. cum vino tritum potui datum calclusos prodest) does not rule out veterinary use; cf. Mul. Chir. 228; Veg. Mul. 1.46.
of arteriosclerosis. It is also employed in herbal veterinary treatments.\footnote{See de Baïracli Levy (note 7) 76-77, and esp. 253-54 (to expel worms in horses) and 280 (to treat glands); cf. Mul. Chir. 199, 204; Veg. Mul. 1.18.}

Frankincense features as the sixth ingredient in Agr. 70.\footnote{See J.I. Miller, The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire (Oxford 1969) 102-04.} The only imported substance, it was used in religious ceremonies and at funerals (Plin. NH 12.83). Possibly because of its association with purification, it was widely prescribed in Graeco-Roman medicine.\footnote{N. Groom, Frankincense and Myrrh. A Study of the Arabian Incense Trade (London/New York 1981) 14-15.} Veterinary applications are attested in, among others, Col. 6.5.2-3; Mul. Chir. 999; and Veg. 4.3.12-14. The savin plants that constitute the seventh ingredient are 
Juniperus sabina L.,\footnote{J. André, Les noms de plantes dans la Rome antique (Paris 1985) 223.} which Pliny claims (NH 24.102) cures jaundice and chicken pox. Modern pharmacognosy guides report its anthelmintic, diuretic, and vermifugal properties.\footnote{For example, Duke (note 28) 257.} In NH 20. 131-43, Pliny attributes a long list of medicinal properties to rue, 
Ruta graveolens L.,\footnote{André (note 36) 221.} noting it to be an important medicinal plant (NH 20.131) for human and especially veterinary application (NH 20.143). He recommends it, taken in wine, as an antidote to snakebite and other pains, and to counteract respiratory problems. It featured in countless veterinary prescriptions in antiquity: for example, Pelag. 106, 382. Its vermifugal and insecticidal properties are recognised today.\footnote{De Baïracli Levy (note 7) 49-50.}

The therapeutical powers of the ninth ingredient, white bryony, 
Bryonia dioica (Jacq.)\footnote{For example, Duke (note 28) 417-18; de Baïracli Levy (note 7) 122-23.} are catalogued in Plin. NH 23.21-26. Useful as a diuretic and a laxative, it was also believed to repel snakes. Modern veterinary herbalists prescribe the root as a tonic and as an aphrodisiac.\footnote{André (note 36) 273.} Beans, the tenth ingredient and a highly nutritive food, are recommended for their power to cure coughs and chest suppurations (Plin. NH 22.140). Modern guides mention their carminative, digestive and diuretic properties.\footnote{De Baïracli Levy (note 7) 164, 221, 264.} The employment of charcoal seems to have been for magical purposes, as noted above, though modern veterinary herbalists use it in internal cleansing treatments.\footnote{For example, Duke (note 28) 362-63.} Wine, the twelfth ingredient, was, with vinegar, the almost
universal medium for the administration of other substances, compounding a medicine in liquid form. Its therapeutic properties were valued throughout Classical Antiquity. Asclepiades, the physician of the 1st century BC who treated through diet, composed a book on the administration of wine as a medicinal substance (Plin. NH 23.32). Pliny himself noted that wine administered as a drench to pack animals relieves tiredness (NH 23.44).

Agr. 71, a prescription to counteract the outbreak of an unspecified illness, requires one whole, raw egg to be given immediately to the ailing ox, to be followed the next day by a bulb of great-headed garlic mashed up in wine. Eggs were widely used for medicinal purposes as well as a food. In a catalogue of the therapeutic uses of hens' eggs (NH 30.39-51), Pliny remarks that no food is so nourishing in sickness (NH 30.48). The second stage of the treatment laid down in Agr. 71 is an abridged version of the preventive treatment detailed in Agr. 70. The twelve substances of the general prophylactic tonic are here reduced to two, great-headed garlic and wine, the medium of administration. Symptoms of the unspecified complaint that Agr. 71 is designed to treat may perhaps be lack of appetite and lassitude, as Columella recommends the treatment for those conditions (Col. 6.4.2; cf. Pall. 14.4.2). The affliction itself may be intestinal cramps, as Pliny reports a prescription compounded of eggs, garlic and wine for use in cases of human colic (NH 30.50).

The tonic to be given to the cattle each summer, described in Agr. 73, contains two ingredients not yet mentioned in this discussion, far (emmer) and serpullum (thyme). Emmer (Triticum dicoccum), a hardy variety of husked wheat, was widely cultivated in Roman Italy and, according to Pliny, was the first food of ancient Latium (NH 18.82). From archaic times it also played a central role in Roman religious ritual and in the patrician marriage ceremony known as confarreatio. Elsewhere in Cato, emmer is mentioned in the general context of household supplies (Agr. 2.4, 5.3, 23.1, 143.3), as an ingredient in a recipe for cramming doves (Agr. 90) and

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41 As observed by Thielcher (note 10) 278.
42 Far is identified as emmer by N. Jasny, The Wheats of Classical Antiquity (Baltimore 1944) 210 ff. See also the discussion in M.S. Spurr, Arable Cultivation in Roman Italy c. 200 B.C–c. A.D. 100 (London 1986) 10-13. Emmer is illustrated in S.G. Harrison et al., The Oxford Book of Food Plants (Oxford 1969) 3.
as an item in religious offerings performed to ensure the health of the cattle (Agr. 83) and a successful harvest (Agr. 134.1). Although emmer does not feature in Cato’s list of substances used for cattle fodder (Agr. 27, 30, 54, 60), other sources show that it was consumed by animals as well as by people. As Cato’s personal practice seems to have excluded it as an item for normal consumption by cattle, perhaps its use in Agr. 73, like that of salt, is explained by its value as a human foodstuff and its association with religious ritual. The last item, thyme, *Thymus serpillum* L., had a reputation when taken internally as an antidote to snakebite, and was believed to cure intestinal cramps, strangury, quinsy, vomiting, liver and spleen complaints and spitting up of blood (Plin. *NH* 20.254). The whole herb is tonic and antiseptic, and oil of thyme yields thymol, which acts as an effective antiseptic and vermifuge. Modern herbals commend its antispasmodic, antiseptic, carminative, diuretic and worm-expellent properties for both humans and animals.

*Agr.* 96 contains a treatment to prevent ‘scab’ in sheep and other quadrupeds. It has been suggested that this particular disorder may have been psoroptic mange, the most frequent type of sheep scab, caused by the psoroptic mite. Intense itching is the first symptom of this type of mange and large, scaly, encrusted lesions are produced on the woolly areas of the body. Cato recommends that three liquids be assembled: olive lees (the watery fluid contained in olives in addition to the oil), water in which lupins had been boiled, and good quality wine lees. Olive lees, recommended by Cato elsewhere (Agr. 91, 92, 98) as an insect and vermin repellent, were claimed by Pliny to heal mange in pack animals (*NH* 23.75; cf. 15.33). The medicinal powers of lupins are extolled by Pliny (*NH* 22.154-58), who

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47 Spurr (note 45) 12. *Alica*, a form of emmer highly prized for human consumption, is mentioned in Agr. 76.1, 79, 85.
48 André (note 36) 236.
49 Grieve (note 7) 811-15; Duke (note 28) 483-84; de Baräcli Levy (note 7) 137.
50 Goujard (note 10) 260. But the absence of a description of symptoms makes it impossible to determine whether the condition may be identified securely with any known today. See also the cautionary remarks of K.-D. Fischer, *Pelagonius, Ars Veterinaria* (note 1) 131. Cato believed *scabies* to be caused by underfeeding and exposure to wet weather (Agr. 5.7). See also R.A. Roncalli, ‘The history of scabies in veterinary and human medicine from Biblical to modern times’, *Veterinary Parasitology* 25 (1987) 193-98, reprinted with an iconographic supplement in *Veterinary Heritage* 11 (1988) 2-12
51 West (note 26) 384.
notes that olive lees mixed with a decoction of lupins cures mange in quadrupeds. He also notes the powers of wine lees to cure sores and ulcers (NH 23.64). Cato prescribes that these three liquids are to be mixed and smeared over freshly shorn sheep. After three days the mixture is to be washed off with seawater or a salt-water solution. Pliny also lists the curative properties of seawater (NH 31.62-66), noting its power to relieve itching (NH 31.65) and to cure sheep scab (NH 31.66). Cato’s treatment may well have made things unpleasant for the mites causing the condition.52

Agr. 102 addresses the problem of snakebite, an ever-present hazard judging by the plethora of remedies offered in ancient agricultural and veterinary manuals. This is to be treated internally by a dose of an acetabulum of melanthium, or black cumin (Nigella sativa L.),53 taken in a hemina of wine. Pliny, too, records its reputation for curing bites of snakes, scorpions and spiders (NH 20.182), crocodiles and dogs (NH 23.67). Cato’s use of the Greek measure acetabulum, a calque of δίσββαρον,54 and of the Greek term zmyrnaeum as a synonym for melanthium, itself a word of Greek origin, has been taken as indicative of the Greek provenance of this prescription.

The use of herbs is readily intelligible to the reader, but Cato’s prescription for the external handling of snakebites is at first sight remarkable: pig dung is to be applied to the bite itself. Dung of various animals was a recommended ingredient in many ancient remedies, its properties were amongst others purgative (Cels. 5.5.1), caustic (Cels. 5.8.1) and cauterising (Cels. 6.18.5). In the case of snakebites, the most important property was epispasticity, the ability to draw matter (here the poison) to the surface (Cels. 5.12). Goat’s dung was recommended for the bite of the marsh snake (Cels. 5.27.8).

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Not only do Cato’s veterinary remedies have a unique value as the earliest veterinary treatments recorded in Latin literature, but they also make a

52 A popular remedy for canine mange on the Cape Flats, a sub-economic area outside Cape Town, is the application of motor oil.
53 André (note 36) 157.
54 Pliny, NH 21.185 includes acetabulum in a list of Greek measures used in Latin, though Von Staden (note 9) does not regard this as conclusive support for the Greek origin of the term.
contribution to a new field of study, that of ethnoveterinary research and development (ERD). A branch of ethnobiology, ERD constitutes the systematic investigation of folk veterinary knowledge, theory and practice. Topics embraced by this diverse discipline include ethnoveterinary pharmacology, magico-religious practices and the folk management of animal health in the context of larger economic, ideological and political structures. Cato’s provisions for the well-being of livestock present veterinary anthropologists and historians of folk veterinary medicine with some comparative material from ancient Italy.

APPENDIX

1. <Bubus medicamentum.> si morbus metues, sanis dato salis micas tres, folia laurea III, porri fibras III, ulpici spicas III, alii spicas III, turis grana tria, herbae sabinae plantas tres, rutae folia tria, uitis albae caules III, fabulos albos III, carbones uivos III, uini S. III: haec omnia sublimiter legi teri darique oportet. 2. ieiunus siet qui dabit. per triduum de ca potione unicuique boui dato. ita disidito, cum ter unicuique dederis, omnem absumas: bosque ipsus et qui dabit facito ut eterque sublimiter stet. uase ligneo dato. (Agr. 70)

I. <Remedy for cattle.> If you fear disease, give them while they are healthy three grains of salt, 3 bay leaves, 3 leek leaves, 3 cloves of great-headed garlic, 3 cloves of garlic, three grains of frankincense, three savin plants, three leaves of rue, 3 stalks of white bryony, 3 white beans, 3 pieces of burning charcoal, 3 sextarii of wine: all these should be gathered, crushed and administered standing upright. 2. The person who is to administer it must be fasting. Give to each ox from that potion for three days. Divide it up in such a way that when you have dosed each one three times, you use up the whole amount: see that the ox itself and the one who administers [the dose] are both standing upright. Give it from a wooden utensil.

56 The text used is that of A. Mazzarino, M. Porcii Catonis De Agricultura (2nd edition Leipzig 1982); the translations are by the author.
2. Bos, si aegrotare coeperit, dato continuo ei unum oum gallinaceum crudum: integrum facito devoret. postridie caput ulpici conterito cum hemina uini facitoque ebibat: sublimiter terat et uso ligneo det, bosque ipsus et qui dabit sublimiter stet: ieiunus ieiuno boui dato. (Agr. 71)

*If an ox has begun to sicken, give it without delay one hen’s egg, raw: make it swallow it whole. The next day, pound up a head of great-headed garlic in a hemina of wine and make it drink it up. The giver should pound [sc. the ingredients] standing upright and administer [sc. the dose] in a wooden utensil, and the ox itself and the one who administers should stand upright. The giver should administer it on an empty stomach to an ox with an empty stomach.*

3. Boues, ne pedes subterant, priusquam in uiam quoquam ages, pice liquida cornua infima unguito. (Agr. 72)

*So that oxen do not wear down their feet, before you drive them anywhere on a road, smear the bottom of their hooves with melted pitch.*

4. Vbi uuae uariae coeperint fieri, bubus medicamentum dato quotannis, uti ualeant pellem anguinam ubi uideris, tollito et condito: ne quaeras cum opus siet. eam pellem et far et salm et serpullum, haec omnia una conterito cum uino, dato bubus bibant omnibus: per aestatem boues aquam bonam et liquidam bibant semper curato: ut ualeant refert. (Agr. 73)

*When the grapes begin to change colour, administer a remedy to the cattle every year, so that they may enjoy good health. When you see a snake skin, pick it up and store it: in order to avoid looking for one when you need it. That skin, emmer wheat, salt and thyme, crush all these together in wine, give to all the cattle to drink. Throughout the summer always see that the cattle have good, clear water to drink: it is important to keep them healthy.*
5. Oues ne scabrae fiant, amurcam condito, puram bene facito; aquam
<qua> lupinus deferuerit et faecem de uino bono, inter se omnia
commisceto pariter. postea, cum detonderis, unguito totas: sinito
biduum aut triduum consudent. 2. deinde lauito in mari; si aquam
marinam non habebis, facito aquam salsam: ea lauito. si haec sic
feceris, neque scabrae fient et lanae plus et meliorem habebunt, et
ricini non erunt molesti. eodem in omnes quadripedes utito, si
scabrae erunt. (Agr. 96)

To prevent sheep from getting mange, take olive lees, filter it
well: water in which lupins have boiled and lees of good wine,
mix them all together in equal quantities. Then, when
you have shorn [sc. the sheep], smear them all over [sc. with this
mixture]: let them sweat for two or three days. 2. Then wash
them in the sea; if you do not have sea water, make brine and
wash them with that. If you follow this procedure, they will
not get mange and they will produce more wool and of better
quality, and ticks will not trouble them. Use the same remedy
for all quadrupeds if they are infested by mange.

6. Si bouem aut aliam quamuis quadrupedem serpens momorderit,
melanthi acetabulum, quod medici vocant zmurnaeum, conterito
in uini ueteris hemina: id per nares indito et ad ipsam morsum stercus
saillum apponito. et idem hoc, si usus euenerit, homini facito. (Agr:
102)

If a snake has bitten an ox or any other quadruped, crush an
acetabulum of black cumin, which doctors call zmurnaeum,
in a hemina of old wine. Administer it through the nostrils
and apply pig dung to the bite itself. And carry out this same
treatment for a person, if the need arises.

7. Boues uti ualeant et curati bene sint et, qui fastidient cibum, uti
magis cupide adpetant, pabulum, quod dabis, amurca spargito:
primo paululum, dum consuescant: postea magis. et dato rarenter
bibere commixtum cum aqua aequabiliter. quarto quinto quoque
die hoc sic facies: ita boves et corpore curatiores erunt et morbus aberit. (Agr. 103)

To keep cattle well and in good condition and to give the ones that are off their feed a keener appetite, sprinkle the fodder you give them with olive lees: a little at first, until they get used to it, then larger amounts. And from time to time give them olive lees to drink, mixed in equal parts with water. Do this every fourth or fifth day: in this way the cattle will be in better condition and disease will stay away.
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