

Call for Papers

Workshop "Producing health and disease in the stable, 1930-1980" (Zürich, April 2020)

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Between the 1930s and 1980s agricultural production methods in Europe changed significantly. The "industrialisation of organisms" influenced the way people worked and dealt with livestock (Schrepfer and Cranton 2003). Economic policies aiming at boosting performance and production went hand in hand with an increasing specialisation in agriculture and the professionalization of the actors involved. An important area of this profound change were the diseases in the stable.

Most recent research has focused on the consequences of intensified agriculture and intensive animal husbandry on food safety, consumption behaviour, and risk assessment for societies. We propose, however, to draw the attention to the specific practices and materialities that have emerged around "animal health". Our workshop will focus on the question of how health and disease were "produced" in the stable between the 1930s and the 1980s. We assume that key actors included were veterinarians, farmers and animals themselves. But we also see a diverse set of other groups involved: feed producers and agricultural advisory services, agronomists and zootechnicians, cooperative organisations, public and private research institutes and laboratories, the pharmaceutical industry as well as supra-national actors. All these groups "co-produced" animal health in the stable in different ways (Woods 2019). In fact, we consider our case as a primary example for the new "production diseases" (Payne 1971), which requires the analysis of the close collaboration between many actors.

Who were the actors involved in prescribing new substances and "solutions" adapted to the goal of increasing yields? How have these different actors tried to prevent or cure diseases given their unclear (and uneven) manifestations in animal populations? How did collaboration and conflict manifest between the different professional and experts, and the often-divergent economic and sanitary interests? What kind of understanding of "natural" and "healthy" animals guided the relevant actors?

We endeavour to pay closer attention to the importance of the use of medical substances in the stable. We assume that the rapid increase in drug use after 1950 not only served therapeutic purposes, but also provided a response to various problems in husbandry and livestock. These problems appeared due to the intensification and specialisation of agriculture (e.g. the concentration of populations in artificial environments). However, we are also interested in practices and strategies outside of this growing influence of pharmaceutical substances, but which have nevertheless been transformed to adapt to structural changes in livestock farming. Additionally, we ask whether and in which contexts resistance to the overarching goal of improving performance was articulated and put in practice, the role of medical substances, and how alternative concepts were developed.

We invite researchers to propose presentations based on original research on the following aspects:

- The use of drugs in the stable and the role of the pharmaceutical industry
- Farm animals as suppliers of substances for pharmaceutical production
- The relations (conflictual or not) between veterinarians, agronomists and zootechnicians in the field of animal health
- The perspectives and practices of farmers and their interests in the use of pharmaceutical products
- The work of veterinary and agricultural research institutes (private/public) in the field of animal health
- "Production diseases" and "animal health" as new critical topics and categories
- The animal feed industry and animal feed as actor and vehicle for the introduction of drugs into the barn
- Interactions between veterinary and human medicine and the role of the market for pharmaceutical substances (preventive or therapeutic)

Contributions offering critical reflections on archival materials, sources and different methodological approaches are particularly welcome.

The workshop will take place in Zurich in the last week of April 2020.

An abstract of 400 words (in German, French or English) explaining the question, approach and source base is requested by end of December 2019 to: beat.baechi@uzh.ch