The equestrian influence and the foundation of veterinary schools in Europe, c. 1760-1790

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During the first half of the eighteenth century, cattle plague periodically decimated livestock across the breadth of Europe to an extent never witnessed before.[1] Even though the main features of cattle plague had been mapped out by 1709, providing hope for its prevention and cure, this discovery did little to halt subsequent outbreaks of an animal pandemic that was frequently compared, in its scope and intensity, to its human equivalent, the Bubonic plague (Fleming 1871 II, p.180-1). Between 1711 and 1769, for example, losses to cattle amounted to approximately 100 million for the whole of Europe. At least 10 million of these occurred in France and Belgium, while in Germany 14 million and in Holland upwards of 600,000 perished (Spinage 2003, p.133). Such devastation naturally forced individual European states to implement measures to curtail the worst excesses of cattle plague. During 1714 and 1715, for example, the French absolutist state intervened in a particularly bad case of cattle plague, despatching a large number of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries to the infected regions in an attempt to separate healthy cattle from the infected herd (Hannaway 1972, p. 261). But this did little to dent the spread of the disease at a time

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when Europe still relied overwhelmingly on the assistance of itinerant 'cow doctors' or 'cow leeches' 'whose advice and "treatment"', in the words of Lise Wilkinson, 'were at best useless, at worst actually harmful if not lethal' (1992, p.38). By the time the *Landtag* in Saxony found itself, in 1755, faced with another bout of cattle plague, concerns about the need to better prepare for the devastation had reached fever pitch. 'You see it is not unknown to His Majesty', a representative pleaded, 'how much the cattle plague in these lands have, despite all measures taken against it, wrought havoc for thirty years or more and that it is impossible to put forward reliable measures of prevention and cure without knowing for sure either the cause or, more importantly, the effects on the body of cattle' (cited in Michel 2003, p.140).

Curiously, such devastation did not provide an opportunity for medical doctors to conduct researches into and counteract the effects of cattle plague, not least because they wanted as little to do with animal medicine as possible. Stretching as it did as far back as the medieval period, this split between human and animal medicine was an entrenched one, which significantly delayed the involvement of the former in the latter. Since those who tended and cared for domesticated animals were looked down upon, medical doctors took pains to maintain a safe distance from animals as well as those who mingled with them (Wilkinson 1992, p.3). 'One must leave animal medicine not to doctors,' they would typically object, 'one must leave it to the shepherd. These people have been bred with cattle, they have grown up with them and are their true friends and know most about them' (Scherer 1781, p.29) Despite concerted, if isolated, efforts of physicians such as Bernardo Ramazzini, who represented a group at the University of Padua who were scornful of medical

colleagues' allergic reaction to investigating cattle disease and dealing with cow leeches, research into animal disease remained few and far between, remaining so well into the middle of the seventeenth century (Wilkinson 1992, p.42). Even as late as the end of the eighteenth century, the Prussian Academy of Sciences, when consulted about the setting up of a veterinary school in Berlin, replied tartly: 'one cannot expect professors to dig around in the carcasses of animals' (cited in Schmaltz 1936, p.3-4).

Up until now students of veterinary history have generally operated under two interconnected assumptions which have sustained our understanding of the birth of veterinary medicine as a modern profession (Fisher 1993; Hubscher 1999; Lane 1993; Porter 1993; Swabe 1998; Wilkinson 1992; Wilmot 2003). First, the frequency of cattle plague, they believe, was what largely led to the establishment of veterinary schools. Second, the discipline of veterinary medicine, they imply, struggled to take off because scientifically-trained as well as socially-reputable men could not be persuaded to join in the effort. But both positions, this article insists, neglect the immediate context out of which veterinary medicine emerged across Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century – that of equestrian academies. Of course scholars have correctly acknowledged the importance the horse historically held for veterinarians, both as a source of revenue and as a subject of investigation. But this article, based mainly on a critical reading of the relevant secondary literature, looks more closely at the importance of horses. Pointing specifically to the involvement of horsemen, who preferred a particular kind of horse, it argues that these riders operated less from concerns about cattle plague than from the dictates of schools of horsemanship when they set about

founding veterinary schools. Established during the early seventeenth century, the equestrian schools, the article stresses, bequeathed to the veterinary schools a strong attachment to the saddle horse which proved just as important in halting the advance of veterinary medicine as a discipline that catered to a wide range of animals.

Claude Bourgelat and equestrian academies

When Claude Bourgelat opened his *école vétérinaire* in 1762 at Lyon, which subsequently spawned similar veterinary schools in Alfort (Paris), Vienna, Dresden, Hanover and eventually London, he evidently shared little of the afore-mentioned social worries medical men feared came from an association with animals. Much of the reason why Bourgelat felt able to establish his veterinary school was arguably because he was essentially an *écuyer*, or riding master, who operated not within a medical tradition but within an equestrian one, which was concerned, above all, with the welfare of saddle horses in particular rather than the health of animals in general. Such a tradition stretched back first to Italy and more immediately to France, which imported, institutionalised and then popularised the art of horsemanship as an effective way of presenting monarchs and the nobility as figures of authority, eventually inspiring the creation of equestrian portraits as well as the construction of equestrian monuments during the seventeenth century (Liedtke 1989; Mitsuda 2007, chp.1). When Bourgelat assumed the position of *écuyer* at Lyon in 1740, he was thus upholding the practice of viewing horses as special creatures at a highly-revered institution that represented one of the oldest and finest schools of horsemanship in operation (Hubscher 1999, p.29). Wholly committed to the equestrian cause, Bourgelat quickly followed on in the footsteps of the classic riding

masters, such as Pluvinel and Solleysel, publishing his pronouncements upon the art of horsemanship in a book entitled *Le Nouveau Newcastle ou Nouveau Traité de Cavalerie* that established him as one of the finest practitioners of the *manège* (Bourgelat 1744).

Only a few years into his tenure, however, Bourgelat began to move away from how horses should be ridden to how they should be treated. Expressing an interest in pathology and anatomy, which he believed were subjects that had been heavily neglected in the traditional teachings of hippology, he decided to attend courses at the local *College de chirurgie* (Hubscher 1999, p.29-30). His studies there eventually led to the publication, in 1750, of *Eléments d'hippiatrique*, which is said to have been read with interest by Malesherbes before he became secretary of the *Maison du Roi* (Hubscher 1999, p.30). Critically acclaimed by other *philosophes* in Paris, such as Diderot and Alembert, this anatomical work eventually led to Bourgelat being invited to contribute to the *Encyclopédie* (Hubscher 1999, p.30). Such a bold move away from the traditional focus on riding can be sought, to a certain extent, in Bourgelat's unusual biography. By contrast to many other riding masters at the time, he did not hail from a family steeped in the equestrian tradition. For example, he had not followed in the footsteps of his father which his counterpart at Caen, Pierre Herbert Pleignière had done. Nor had Bourgelat assisted in the riding stables of his master which Etienne Lafosse, a Parisen stable master turned veterinarian, had done (Hubscher 1999, p.37). Educated at a Jesuit college, Bourgelat showed little signs of what he would later become when he had gone on to study law in Toulouse from where he obtained a doctorate. During his time as a lawyer in Grenoble, Bourgelat seems to have grown increasingly discontented with his work, subsequently

leaving it to join the army; but at this time there was very little indication of his subsequent interest in horsemanship – still less in veterinary medicine. Only following his service in the military, during which time he presumably discovered an interest in riding, did he arrive in Lyon for the specific aim of taking up lessons in the *manège* (Duplessis 1892, p.358). Such a peripatetic background no doubt made it easier for him to relinquish formal ties to equestrian academies, which he did following objection from other riding masters, in favour of setting up an independent veterinary school.

But equally Bourgelat was far from being original when he made the decision to pursue a veterinary route, and his interest should not be seen as entirely inconsistent with trends within the equestrian academies. As early as 1729, for example, La Guérinière had already taken steps to transform his academy, located on the rue de Vaugirard in Paris, into a place where courses were taught not only with regard to war and fighting but also into the anatomy of the horse with a surgeon employed to conduct dissections. Such a way of teaching had, La Guérinière boasted, 'never been taught in any other academy and which is very useful not only for gentlemen who engage in war exercises but also for cavalry officers who are obliged to have horses' (cited in Duplessis 1892, p.291-292). When Bourgelat himself instigated courses in anatomy, he was following precedent. Not only did the pupils in attendance at his academy learn about the *manège* as well as music and languages, they were also introduced to the kind of diseases horses suffered from, how they occurred and what could be done to treat them. A prospectus for the Lyon Academy, published in 1747, illustrates this point:

> The teaching of the *manège* takes place every day: one teaches here the parts that go into making up the body of

> the horse; the proportions, beauties and defects; the causes and symptoms of diseases; the cures that have to be administered. Then there is also a school of cavalry in which one teaches everything related to this arm. In the rooms of instruction and demonstration, there are walls on which are pictured frescos of fourteen actual-sized horses with pointers to various external diseases. As for interior diseases, depictions of the behaviour of horses are shown which indicate the symptoms. Lastly, there is also a depiction of a dissected foal which has all the vessels, muscles, internal organs, and other parts as they would appear in real life. In showing things this way, the physical and mechanical functions of a horse are rendered easy to understand (cited in Duplessis 1892, p.360).

What is important to point out about both La Guérinière and Bourgelat's early attempts to include anatomy as part of their curricula, is that they still took place within the comfortable, noble and idealistic settings of the equestrian academies. As such, courses were designed to inform and enlighten a particular clientele – 'les officiers de cavalerie' and 'les gentilhommes' – who never seriously entertained any pretension to become experts in the disease of horses other than for their own intellectual nourishment.

The focus on farriery and recruitment from the lower classes

Where Bourgelat parted company, both with La Guérinière and with equestrian academies in general, it was not over what was taught, but where it was taught and to whom, for the veterinary school deliberately took to train 'ordinary farriers', recruited from the lower orders, who would be tasked with treating ailments and shoeing horses (Règlemens, 1777). Ideally the kind of pupil Bourgelat envisaged had only a smattering of education – enough to be able to read and write basic French – with greater weight placed

on his physical attributes. This was the reason why a candidate would not be accepted who exceeded the age of 30, since he would be in essence un-malleable to the teachings conducted and one step too slow for mastering the menial practicalities of the job. Hailing from a rural milieu, the pupil would be sent back from where he came after completing his studies, so as to benefit the local community of which he was a part. More significantly, teaching would take place in a highly-regimented setting. Pupils – not students – who came out from the provinces would be housed together in dormitories, with curfews placed on their daily routines and limitations imposed on what they could read and when. Books would be confiscated, if pupils were found reading literature unbecoming of an obedient farrier. During the course of instruction, teachers, who acted more like moral guardians and disciplinarians, would also co-habit, following pupils' every move. Thus incarcerated, nothing untoward could escape the attention of the Bourgelat schools (Hubscher 2004, p.16-31).

To understand why Bourgelat was overly concerned about 'ordinary farriers', who would first and foremost look after the welfare of horses, it would be necessary to look at the wider context in which he was operating his school. Even as he was founding a veterinary school in his home town of Lyon, Anne-Robert Turgot, a physician in the Limousin, had taken to setting up something similar, but in Limoges, in 1766. Profoundly concerned with the devastating effects of cattle plague on local livestock, however, Turgot specifically earmarked his establishment to incorporate farm animals, as opposed to narrowly looking after the interest of horses (Hannaway 1972, p.436). Nonetheless his school never succeeded in attracting the kind of attention that Bourgelat, with his institutional

and financial stability, so effortlessly managed to garner. After three years in operation it folded. Yet neither the concerns over the effects of cattle plague nor the resolve of Turgot abated. A decade later, Turgot re-surfaced as Comptroller-General of Finances in Paris, an influential position he kept between 1774 and 1776. During his tenure, he set about implementing what he considered to be the proper function of veterinary medicine: the battle against cattle plague. Following a bout of cattle plague, which had wreaked havoc among French cattle in 1770 and 1771, Turgot established a Royal Commission for Epidemics to tackle the disease's effects on livestock. But on this occasion, rather than turn to the obvious choice of the Bourgelat schools, Turgot deliberately sought advice from the *Académie des Sciences*, appointing to the position of commissioner, Felix Vicq d'Azyr, a revered anatomist, whose appointment marked a significant turning point for veterinary medicine. Only a few decades later did his research-orientated and dispassionate approach to the discipline open up a new and irreversible road down which budding veterinarians with interests other than to become farriers could proceed. Bringing about a move away from a fixation on horses – possibly because he had no links to the equestrian tradition – this belated strand had as its hallmarks a wider interest in animal disease and proper research into its causes and effects. Presenting itself as an alternative approach, it inadvertently challenged the equestrian tradition. Receptive rather than ignorant to what was happening to livestock affected by outbreaks of cattle plague, Vicq d'Azyr founded the *Société Royale de Médecine* two yeas after his appointment as commissioner. At the same time, Vicq d'Azyr helped to inaugurate a journal, *Histoire de la Société Royale de Médecine*, in which the authors dealt extensively with a wide range of diseases,

such as sheep disease, dysentery and fevers that affected a variety of animals – and not just horses (Wilkinson 1992, p.75). What Vicq d'Azyr proceeded in espousing was that there was little difference between humans and animals. Establishing the branch of comparative medicine, he invited both human and veterinary medicine to come closer, exhorting in his *Mémoire instructif sur l'établissement*, published in 1776, that 'the diseases which attack men are applicable without any exception to those which attack animals. Medicine is one; and its general principles, once set out, are very easy to apply to different circumstances and species' (cited in Hannaway, 1977, p.438).

Such a context points up, firstly, the extent to which scientific concern with cattle plague arrived too late to have an impact on the founding on veterinary schools as equine-centred institutions. Secondly, it explains why Bourgelat, who must have recognised the threat, wanted his pupils to come from the lower orders because he did not want them to take interest in wider aspects of animal medicine. He thus welcomed with open arms those who only boasted a minimum level of education. Even better were those whose fathers themselves were farriers and who could return to their communities. Not only was this sensible because it meant jobs would be guaranteed upon completion of training, but it was also shrewd because the chances of them staying farriers were, in such cases, high. Circumscribing the conditions of entry by placing emphasis on low academic attainment and stressing the importance of experience in handling animals properly was a means by which the equine focus could be maintained. For Bourgelat feared, not that farriers would usurp their riding masters in contesting the knowledge of the horse, but that they would, if he did not lay down a strict curriculum and force them to lead disciplined lives, have too much time and

freedom in developing their intellectual curiosities, which would eventually lead to an engagement with complicated and scientific aspects of veterinary medicine that went perilously beyond farriery and concern with all types of animals. Such a fear is heavily hinted at in his *Règlemens* in which Bourgelat warns pupils from leaving the school to pursue more worldly interests:

> It is certainly possible that pupils will commit … grave mistakes which oblige them to leave the schools. There will also be pupils who, having received a complete education, forget what they owe to the provinces, which had sent them, by moving away from them after finishing school. They are motivated either by self-confidence or by foreign temptations in the hope of striking it big than what they could expect from the kind of education which are provided for them (Règlemens 1777, p.11).

The fact that the medical establishment, kicked off by the appointment of Vicq d'Azyr to the head of the Royal commission on epidemics, had entered the fray, must have particularly concerned Bourgelat. Coming only a year after the anatomist proclaimed there to be no difference between humans and animals, and hence, between human and veterinary medicine as disciplines, the worry that pupils, who studied at Lyon and Alfort, would turn their backs on him seemed a genuine possibility when he drew up his *Règlemens*. Sharing the same spirit, Philippe Chabert, who succeeded the founder at Alfort, expected the worst from Vicq d'Azyr's unwelcome meddling. He fiercely objected to the training of medical surgeons at his veterinary school, not least because such 'mixing' might push his pupils towards taking up human rather than equine medicine (Wilkinson 1992, p.74-5).

More ominously, such sentiments survived implantation into other national contexts, of which the English one provides useful illustration and counterbalance to the French case. No doubt the success of 'transfer' had much to do with the fact that the initiator, who first made the trip across the channel in 1788 to found the veterinary college in London, was a Frenchman schooled in the Bourgelat mould. At the beginning of plans to set up a veterinary college in London, Charles Vial de Sainbel, who had received his training at both Lyon and Alfort, expressed familiar concerns about the interference of the medical profession. Even before the college had opened its doors, he fretted that medical students would swamp his lectures on comparative anatomy and pathology. This led to recommendations that the buildings of the future college should be located away from the centre of London, so that pupils learning veterinary medicine could not be led astray through fleeting yet promiscuous contact with their medical brothers (Pugh 1962, p.45). Much of these concerns came to be addressed when the College opened its doors in 1792. Not only did the school come to be located in still rural Camden, it also continued to stay true to its Bourgelatian roots, shunning the involvement of medical men and sticking to the focus on farriers. Even following the unexpected early loss of Sainbel to glanders, when there was a glimmer of hope that things might change, the door was firmly shut on the face of doctors, who continued to be denied entry, even as Edward Coleman, a medical doctor by training, took over the reins in 1793 (Alder 1985, p.32-3). Some thirty years later, and with Coleman still at the helm of the now chartered Royal Veterinary College, the frustration within the pages of the farriery-hostile journal, *The Veterinarian*, was palpable. Reflecting on over thirty years of what he considered

stagnation, one writer despaired it had not dawned on Coleman, as it had on him, that medical men were more able at becoming competent veterinarians than farriers, which the College continued to churn out. If doctors were allowed entry to the school, the critic insisted, farriers would be no match for men of science. Since farriers would find it difficult to pick up on the basics of anatomy, physiology and pathology, it made sense for doctors, who could learn them with ease, to be employed – all the more so, because the time required in acquiring practical knowledge would be much shorter (Anon, 1828, p.135). But this was a point that non-equestrian observers, who fixated on the lack of academic prowess among farriers, frequently missed:

> The summit of the farrier's son's education, which is reading and writing, will never allow him to reach beyond a certain point; he has the liberty of attending certain lectures in town, it is true, but he has not the time to do so...; and if he had, he has not the ability to understand them. He goes then to the college for a few months; has his head filled with a few theories of the foot, and a parcel of hard words he is incapable of understanding; and is then sent home as a monstrous clever fellow (Anon 1828, p.135).

All this, I would argue, was not neglect but deliberate. Even as critics lamented that the London College could not 'prevent any chimney sweep from becoming a pupil', the point was surely that the school would welcome anyone who had such admirable low class credentials (Anon 1828, p.458). If an equine focus could be maintained then there was no reason why a cohort of subservient men – chimney sweep or otherwise – should not become farriers. Preserving the association of lower class and veterinarian helped limit the scope of pupils' intellectual curiosities. Only by doing so could

one guarantee the focus on the horse and keep the animal, with its glorious riding past, 'special'.

The foundation of veterinary schools and the equine focus

Following the foundation of the Bourgelat schools – first in Lyon in 1762 and then at Alfort near Paris in 1765 – veterinary institutions quickly emerged across Europe which took their cue from the French model. Crucially, it was the equestrian interest which took the initiative, quickly creating an infrastructure that catered for the welfare and the health of the horse rather than for the wider interests of all animals and those who were interested in them. In Hanover, for example, preliminary interest in establishing a veterinary institution came from Johann Adam Kersting. As *Marschallpferdearzt*, or Stable Horse Doctor, he had been serving the Crown Prince when he came to found the *Roßarzney-schule*, or School of Equine Medicine, which was one of the first of its kind in Germany, in 1778. Far removed from any concern with cattle plague, Kersting's immediate concern was similar to Bourgelat's in that he felt a need for well-trained farriers, who could be relied upon to cure and shoe horses that could withstand the exertions of war, an interest that was reflected in his book, *Sicherer und wohl erfahrener Huf- und Reitschmied* (Schmaltz 1936, p.11).

Much of the Hanover school's abiding focus on the horse was sustained by Kersting's right-hand man, August Conrad Havemann, who had received his training at Alfort. Totally consumed by his passion for horse-breeding, Havemann was appointed stud director at Neuhaus in Solling in 1782. Following the death of Kersting, he inherited the post of director in Hanover, a situation which meant

the school's focus was to remain equine until he too passed away in 1819 (Schmaltz 1936, p.12). A similar state of affairs pertained in Vienna, which became the first veterinary establishment to be founded in Europe outside French soil, by Maria Theresia, in 1767. Envisaging an institution that would better train blacksmiths and horse doctors, the Empress sent Ludwig Scotti to Lyon, the first director of what was to become the *Pferdekur-Operationsschule*, on the specific instruction that 'a complete understanding of the horse and cures to treat its disease should be acquired and that after his return he should teach the country's young what he has learnt about the art' (Röll 1878, p.2). Such an equine emphasis remained in place when Johann Gottlieb Wolstein took over the school, almost exclusively catering to the requirements of the horse. Both directors of the first two periods, between 1767-1777 and 1777-1795 respectively, were from their training horse doctors, and it was only later with the appointment of the Bohemian medical doctor Ignaz Josef Pessina, who had been heavily involved with controlling cattle plagues, that an expansion into extra-equine territory gradually came into being (Noel 1998, p.57).

Even in more ambiguous cases, such as Dresden, where both the equestrian and animal strands locked horns, it was still invariably the former which ultimately held sway. On one corner, both the University of Wittenberg and the state, stressed the need to study cattle medicine; while on the other, Heinrich von Lindenau, an *écuyer*, wanted to send someone to Alfort, so that when the sponsored candidate returned, he could take up appointment as *Oberrossarzt*, or Senior Horse Doctor, at the Princely Stables (Michel 2003, p.140-142). Consequently, the candidate selected to make the trip to France ended up being a compromise. Echoing, in his

acceptance letter, the precarious tightrope he was forced to walk, Ernst Planern promised: 'I take it that by an *école vétérinaire* is meant a joint school for both horse and cattle doctors. I will therefore learn with the intention of giving lessons on horses and cattle' (cited in Michel 2003, p.142). Even so, despite the heated debate over what the school should focus on, the Dresden school did not immediately materialise. Pushed as it was down the pecking order by plans to erect a school for midwives, in the end the compromise candidate never made it to France. Instead, it was Christian Weber, the riding master's initial choice, who with Lindenau's backing, was able to come up with the resources to travel to and study in Paris. Following his return it was Weber who founded the first, albeit private, veterinary school in Dresden in 1774, with, once again, an inevitable bias being placed on the horse (Michel 2003, p.142-144). Unsurprisingly, the equine focus was not an emphasis that could easily be dislodged. Despite protestations from the local *Sanitäts-Collegium*, which professed a vested interest in cattle, the Dresden school continued to be occupied by a succession of 'veterinarians' from the Royal Stables, and, as such, the school kept on referring to itself as a *Roßarztschule*, refusing to serve the animal as opposed to the equine interest (Michel 2003, p.145-146).

By now it should be clear that the veterinary schools Bourgelat helped institute and inspire across Europe were not, in the present-day use of the term, strictly 'veterinarian'. By deliberately recruiting from the lower classes, the focus on farriery and, in turn, the horse, could be successfully maintained. But in doing so, he neglected a whole swathe of healers as well as scientists who were interested in dealing with other domesticated animals, such as cats, dogs, cattle, oxen, sheep, and pigs and who might have wanted to sign up to his

'veterinary school', if only it had had a broader remit. Ultimately Bourgelat could not quite bring himself to kick the horse off its exalted position by treating it like any other animal. When he came to write textbooks, for example, for use in his schools, Bourgelat insisted on the primacy of the horse until the end of his life, writing little on anything else. In his misleadingly-titled *Eléments de l'art Vétérinaire*, he devoted ample space to an explanation of the anatomical features of the horse which, in turn, served as a means of handing out instructions on how diseases and faults could be detected; but he did not range beyond discussing how they could be applied to other animals (Bourgelat 1825). Of course, this is not to say that the Lyon school in particular and the veterinary schools in general completely excluded the imparting of knowledge of other animals – even at the outset. When the French government passed a decree of the Royal Council in August 1761, which gave permission for setting up a school in Lyon, it noted that 'it permits Monsieur Bourgelat to establish in Lyon a school which has the objective of imparting knowledge and the treatment of the diseases of cattle, horses, mules etc' (cited in Hubscher 1999, p.33). Equally, it is clear in the national regulations of 1777 that veterinary pupils were called upon to help out with the various departmental commissariats when epidemics struck (Règlemens 1777, p.243-249). But both, it seems, were top-down considerations, which seem to have had little bearing on what took place within the schools in practice: the training up of farriers to serve the horse. As a French interior minister complained: 'What does one teach at the *écoles vétérinaires*? A poor grounding in *materia medica*, horse-shoeing according to geometric principles, and a rough understanding of animal anatomy. But one neglects the teaching of *Buiatrik* (cattle disease) or, what's more, one knows

nothing about the diseases of cows and sheep and how to treat them. One simply does not engage with the epidemics of such animals' (cited in Froehner 1968 III, p.76) Such a difference in opinion, which boiled down to the issue of whether the horse was central or a mere part of the veterinarians' endeavours, is crucial in understanding how the discipline developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Of course, scholars have often highlighted veterinarians' abiding concern with horses during this period. But this article has argued that it was much more than an innocent attachment, for the equestrian tradition cast an ominous shadow over the development of veterinary medicine during its early years. When this influenced ceased to be less important, however, is a question that goes beyond the scope of this piece.

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