



## Historicizing Farm Animals: Cowsheds, Battery Cages, and Pigsties as Laboratories for One Health

Farm animals have been important actors in the transformations of medicine and the environment. The industrialization of livestock farming has had a huge impact on health and disease management, both in the barn and in the clinic. In order to understand the farm animals' roles in these processes, we need to historicize them. This entails taking a closer look at various animals in their housing environments. Cowsheds, battery cages and pigsties were important laboratories for new health regimes. By analyzing what enters and exits these stables, we can gain insight into the material flows related to farm animals and their health management, revealing their influence on environmental health. These changes inside and outside the barns require to integrate (new) actors into the historicization of farm animals. Breeding companies, the pharmaceutical and food industries, agricultural engineers, feed mills, research stations and international organizations – to name just a few - have all "co-produced" animal health (and productivity) together with veterinarians, farmers, and the animals (Woods 2019). However, not only health, but also diseases were produced in the barn. Animal health therefore set out to combat the production diseases that resulted from the attempted industrialization of metabolism (Landecker 2023).

Recent research has focused on the consequences of intensified agriculture on food safety, consumer behaviour, and risk assessment for societies. Meat as a main product has been discussed in depth as well. However, little research has focused on the specific practices and materialities of producing "healthy" livestock and its impact on veterinary medicine, human medicine, and the environment. In particular, public health and preventive approaches to animal health have so far received marginal attention. This also applies to breeding hygiene, which had major consequences for changes in animal health. We also believe that the dream of a germ-free life and issues around biosecurity are important for the history of farm animals.

The following questions will be at the core of our workshop: What counted as a healthy animal? What problems did veterinary medicine solve, and which new issues did it create? To what extent have changes in animal health and the industrialization of agriculture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century mutually shaped each other? Which actors were involved in producing 'healthy' animals? Where did their interests overlap, leading to cooperation or conflict? By broadening the scope beyond the risks of food production just for human health, we want to critically engage with the concept of *One Health*, which conceives of the health of humans, animals, plants and ecosystems as a singular complex. How can a historical perspective contribute to striving for *More-than-One Health* (Braverman 2023)?



Papers can address, but are not limited to, the following issues:

- *Animal Health in the Industrialized Stable*

How did animal health change with the industrialization of agriculture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? And how was the metabolism of livestock industrialized? We are looking for contributions that trace the intersections of human, animal and environmental health in industrialized livestock husbandry. Furthermore, we would like to invite participants to reflect on the impact of intensive livestock farming on the animal's bodies, their metabolisms as well as on human and environmental health. Or to paraphrase William Cronon: Are today's industrialised livestock more intrinsically destructive to human health and the environment than farmed organisms? Is a healthy animal also a productive animal, or, in other words, to what extent is the increase in productivity connected to and entangled with the increasingly flexible category of 'health'?

- *Cooperation and Conflict surrounding Farm Animal Health*

Which actors were involved in producing 'healthy' animals? Where did their interests intersect, resulting in cooperation or conflict? This cluster focuses on interactions between different stakeholders involved in animal health. We especially invite research into the role of the pharmaceutical and animal feed industries as a vehicle for the introduction of pharmaceutical substances into the barn (preventive or therapeutic). In addition, contributions dealing with veterinary public health are also very welcome. We are equally interested in inter- and transdisciplinary interactions of human and veterinary medicine, environmentalists as well as governmental, retail, and rural actors.

- *More-than-One Health in the Farm Animal Industry*

By broadening the scope of health beyond the human, we invite participants to critically engage with *One Health*, an approach that conceptualizes the health of humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems as a singular complex. *One Health* has become known to a wider public mainly through discussions and problems around bird flu (avian influenza), particularly since the epidemics at the turn to the 21st century. Recent debates on the *One Health* approach have pointed out its persistent anthropocentrism, its limited focus on zoonoses and the dominance of veterinary and human medicine as well as the environmental sciences. How can historical research contribute to a *More-than-One Health* approach, that puts the health of animals, plants, and eco-systems at the centre,



considers a broader range of global health challenges and incorporates knowledge from outside the dominant academic disciplines (Braverman 2023)? What role does it play that the genetic diversity of livestock is decreasing and breeding is concentrated on fewer and fewer actors, particularly as a result of hybridisation? We welcome contributions that continue the exploration of the rootedness of *One Health* in projects of development, international health, aid, and post-colonial reconstruction and shed light on postcolonial health entanglements.

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The workshop is organized by the Chair for the History of Medicine at the University of Zürich, Prof. Dr. Flurin Condrau, and the Swiss National Science Foundation project “[Farm Animals in the Anthropocene](#)”. It will take place from 11<sup>th</sup> June to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2025 in Zürich, Switzerland and features a keynote by Hannah Landecker (University of California, Los Angeles). The aim is to publish the presented papers as a special issue in a high-ranking journal. Participants are asked to pre-circulate a paper of 15 pages (5’000 words). Contributions that offer critical reflections on new archival materials, unusual sources and different methodological approaches are particularly welcome. We will cover the travel and accommodation costs of those presenting a paper at the conference.

Please submit an abstract of 400 words explaining the research question, approach, and source base by 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024 to [beat.baechi@uzh.ch](mailto:beat.baechi@uzh.ch).

<b>Workshop Timetable</b>	
Submission of Abstracts (400 words)	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Decision by organizers	31 <sup>st</sup> July 2024
Submission of pre-circulated papers (5’000 words)	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2025
Workshop	11 <sup>th</sup> June to 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Submission of manuscripts to journal	1 <sup>st</sup> of September 2025