



Artifact from ancient Mesopotamia. (Source: Wikimedia)

“A god touched my sheep”:
understanding veterinary
practices in Ancient
Mesopotamia

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Source: The snakes of South Africa by FW FitzSimons (1912)

History Theme of the World Veterinary Association Congress 2024

The Veterinary History Society of South Africa arranged a day of presentations at the 39th World Veterinary Association Congress in Cape Town on Tuesday 16 April.

Prof. Silvia Nicolás-Alonso, PhD in Veterinary Medicine, and researcher at the Biblical and Oriental Institute University of Leòn in Spain, kick-started the day with a talk on veterinary practices in ancient Mesopotamia. She was followed by Dr Gideon Brückner, past Deputy Director of the OIE, who gave a historical overview of the World Organisation of Animal Health (founded as the OIE - Office International des Epizooties in 1924). A lineup of local speakers followed with Prof Gareth Bath leading the way with a talk on the origins of veterinary services and organisations in South Africa from 1799-1920. Other talks by members of the SA Veterinary History Society included: Dr Ivan Lwanga-Iga on the role of para-veterinarians in Animal Health Services in the erstwhile Transkei, Heloise Heyne on the architecture of the historic buildings of the

Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Institute and Annette Boshoff with two talks: on a century of women pioneers in veterinary research in South Africa and a historical perspective on veterinary textbooks of South Africa.

Presentations on the history of animal diseases were delivered by Dr Antoinette van Schalkwyk on the history of lumpy skin disease vaccines; Dr Anthony Craig on the history of African swine fever; Prof Johan Schoeman on the history of canine babesiosis research in South Africa; Oluwaseun Otosedede-Williams on veterinary expertise on bovine pleuropneumonia in Colonial Nigeria and Carla Goede on the history of snakebite antivenom research in South Africa.

Carla is the new kid on the block but pulled the largest audience on the day with her captivating story about how Herbert Watkins-Pitchford, Andrew Horner and the FitzSimons family contributed to research in this field.



Dr Anthony Craig of the ARC-OVR delivered a talk on the history of African swine fever.