Animal disease in iron-age and early medieval Western Europe

Knowledge, understanding and management
Outline

A Well Developed and Documented Medico-Legal-Veterinary System

• Written Sources
• Post Patrician (Christian)
• Hagiography, Prophecies, Mysticism
• Philosophy, Poetry, Epic sagas
• Annals, Laws

Archaeological and Linguistic Evidence

• Archaeology of the Celtic Era (Hallstatt and La Tene)
• “it is clear from linguistic evidence that many of the essentials of the early Irish legal system go back at least as far as the common Celtic period...”

Fergus Kelly
An Liagh-The Veterinarian?

- Modern Irish
- An Liagh - The leech?
- An Máinlia – The Surgeon
- An Tréidlia – The Vet
- An Dochtúir – The Doctor
Veterinary in Gaelic Ireland

• Medicine in Gaelic Ireland was essentially on a “One-Health” basis
• The treatment of both animals and people was carried out by An Liaigh
• The fee for curing an animal was one third the value of the animal
• An Liagh had an important medico-legal-veterinary function
Allegory of Dian Cécht

Mythology of Gaelic Medicine

• Enigmatic, good and bad
• God / semi-divine healer
• Surgery vs. Medicine
• Killed his physician son
• Tears of daughter
• Healing herbs thrown to winds
• NOBODY knows more than a portion of available cures
The Brehon Laws

• The Brehons might best be described as an order of Druids
• They were primarily involved making judgement according to the Gaelic Laws which had been handed down orally for generations
• Their authority was entirely moral, based on the justice of their judgements
• Appeal to a higher Brehon was possible
• No jails, no death penalty
• Restitution was a fine, levied according to the “honour price” of the individual who had been offended against
Define Defects in Animals

- Defects after Purchase (all animals including slaves)
- Inherent /Fundamental defects
- Contractable/contagious Defects
- Defects of Unknown Origin
- Similar Signs/Different Diseases
- Limitation Period
- Legal Liabilities
Further Stipulations and Definitions

• Define when an animal is cured

• List of Desirable Qualities

• Animals for Food must have been Killed for that Purpose
Driving

• Deliberately Releasing

• Driving into a Marsh

• Driving into an Infected Place

• Cáin Dár Í

• Bó-ár ghan Bedgach
Cattle Diseases

- Opann  Sudden Death
- Idú  Colic
- Scamach - Respiratory
- Adbach  Abortion
- Bedgach  Louping Ill
- Critheach  Trembling
- Ingenas buaile  Anoestrus
- Radrachas  Infertility
- Dallsinche  Mastitis
- Comalne  Dropsy
- Sinech  Cowpox
- Lésán Foiche Warble sting
- Galar Rigín Aphosphorosis?
- Milliuda  Bewitching
- Mille Ba  Bewitching
- Urchar Millte  Elf-shot
Other Species

Diseases of Horses
- Strangles
- Shiverer
- Assorted Lamenesses
- Glanders
- Tetanus
- Colic
- Worms

Diseases of Sheep, Goats, Dogs, Cats, Poultry and Bees
- Less well documented
- Small number of Conditions
Rabies
Conach, Confaid

- Warning
- Kill
- Body to be Burned
- Ashes thrown in River
- The Enigma of the Conach Worm
### Archaeological and Linguistic Connections

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archaeological</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Celtic/Irish intrusion between c.1000-500 B.C.</td>
<td>• Proto-Celtic Language</td>
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<td>• No evidence of violence or genocide</td>
<td>• Irish (Manx, Scots Gaelic)</td>
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<td>• Cultural and political assimilation of two populations</td>
<td>• Celt-Iberian, (Galicia)</td>
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<td>• Brythonic (Welsh, Cornish, Breton)</td>
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<td>• Gallic (Gaulish?), Lepontic</td>
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<td>• Galatian</td>
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Map produced for The Ireland Story. This map may be used elsewhere provided a link is given to www.irelandstory.com, the site is non-profit and the map is not modified.
• Toutatis /Tuatha (de Danaan)---- “I swear by the Gods my people swear by”

• Belenos/Bealtaine/Beltane

• Lugh, Lleu, Lugos, Lugues

• Lugdunum-Lyons

• Dian Cécht

• Badhbh
• Irish Gaelic is the oldest vernacular literature in Northern Europe

• Gaelic Ireland was the repository for ancient Celtic European Lore

• This lore was written down when literacy came to Ireland from the sixth century C.E. on.
“The Senchas of the men of Éireann, what has maintained it? The joint memory of the old men, transmission from one ear to another, chanting of poets, amplification by law of the letter, for those are the strong rocks by which the judgements of the world are fixed.” (Senchas Mór)

“Report says that in the schools of the Druids they learn by heart a great number of verses, and therefore some persons remain twenty years under training. And they do not think it proper to commit these utterances to writing, ...” Caesar, J. De bello gallico, Bk.VI,Ch.11
How Old are the Brehon Laws?

• Pre P/Q Shift
• Before divergence of Brythonic and Goidelic Celtic
• Common Celtic Era
• Dian Cécht, Lugh, Badb, Belenos, Toutatis
• Very Very Old
References

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• *Celtic Culture: A historical encyclopedia*, Ed. John T. Koch, (Santa Barbara,2006.)