Chapter 16
Belarusian Ethnoveterinary Medicine: Ritual Practices and Traditional Remedies

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16.1 Introduction

Issues of health, illness, medical and magical healing practices have been explored by the scholars of a number of disciplines during the last centuries. The main focus of their concern was in human health care. Historians, folklorists and ethnographers have paid little attention to Belarusian ethnoveterinary medicine. An analysis based on ethnographic and folklore study aims to fill in this gap to some extent, concentrating on practices and methods that have been used by Belarusian peasants to treat livestock and preserve their health along with folk concepts and beliefs, which lay beyond them.

Ethnoveterinary medicine is understood here as a specific sphere of culture that is based on the whole traditional world outlook and includes empiric knowledge, ritual practices, a branched complex of folk beliefs as well as animal husbandry magic. This part of cultural experience preceded the official veterinary medicine and co-exists with it. Historically wide use of ethnoveterinary practices and remedies in Belarus was due to the almost complete absence of medical veterinary assistance from the state and local authorities. By the end of 1910, Minsk province Zemstvo administration had at its disposal only 16 precinct veterinarians, two veterinarians for business trips and 36 paramedics, according to the report of the Minsk Provincial Zemstvo Board about the state of the veterinary affairs (Otchyot Minskoy gubernskoy zemskoy upravy po delam zemskogo khozyaystva za 1910). Veterinary stations have been organized by the authorities throughout the country starting from

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the beginning of the twentieth century only, and their number was not enough to serve efficiently (Sivurava 2009). In unsatisfactory veterinary service conditions, private ethnoveterinary practices were the source of accumulation and improvement of knowledge on animal treatment. In contemporary society, when the veterinary service has become accessible and mostly free of charge, ethnoveterinary practices exist in rural areas mostly as auxiliary measures.

Ethnoveterinary medicine is tightly connected with the other aspects of ethnic culture, but the most important among them are the specificity of animal husbandry systems, special mythological beliefs, and interference of neighbouring traditions. Thus, the breeding of cattle, pigs and poultry has been traditionally widespread throughout the country, but horse breeding has been more common to the Podzvinnie and Podnieproŭje regions (Northern and Eastern parts of Belarus), whereas sheep breeding had a less important role in traditional husbandry and has been most intensively developed in Western Belarus (Kasperovich 2009). Goat breeding wasn't widespread among Belarusian peasants and was perceived as a sign of "extreme poverty" of certain peasant households. There was also a popular folk belief that breeding of goats could be the factor that harms breeding of other animals (Nikiforovskiy 1897). Such specificity of Belarusian husbandry affects the availability and diversity of information associated with treating certain animal species and its dissemination in different regions of Belarus. Obviously, the more significant an animal was for peasant households, the more diverse the list of diseases and methods of treatment for that animal.

As for Belarusian folk beliefs that to varying degrees determine inclusion of a particular species of animal into ethnoveterinary practice, it could be mentioned that cats and dogs were believed to be able to treat themselves without the help of humans ("Dog knows better than human what plant it needs, and always find it <the plant> for itself" "Сабака лучшай за чалавека знае, якога яму трэба зельля, і заўсёды сам сабе найдзе" (Piatkievič 2004); "cat has something healing in its claws" "кот у когцях мае нешта жывучае" (Piatkievič 2004)).

A good example of neighbouring traditions influencing Belarusian ethnoveterinary medicine is demonstrated by the distribution of charms for treating pig diseases, which are concentrated in the territory of Western Belarus only, although pig breeding was traditionally widespread throughout the country. Based on the specific verbal formulae of "medical advice", these charms, apparently, came to Belarusian tradition from Poland (Shrubok 2016a).

16.2 Historiography

Belarusian ethnoveterinary medicine as an object of comprehensive study has attracted little attention of researchers until recently. At the same time scholarly research on ethnoveterinary knowledge and practices in Belarus has had an essentially different approach than in the West, where academic interest in traditional health care for animals emerged in the mid-1970s and by the end of the twentieth

century had already become an established academic discipline named ethnoveterinary medicine (Alekseevsky 2010). Meanwhile Western scholars demonstrated a great interest in studying plant and non-plant remedies used to treat animals and further practical implementation of the obtained knowledge, promoting the idea of sustainable development and environmental protection (McCorkle 1986; Berkes 2000), researchers in East Europe countries in general and in Belarus in particular concentrate mostly on folk beliefs and magical rituals associated with livestock health care. According to Luczaj et al. (2013), Belarus still remains *terra incognita* from the modern ethnobotany study's point of view.

The interest in Belarusian folk veterinary practices has apparently been aroused by the work of folklore collectors and researchers since the nineteenth century (Tyszkiewicz (1847), Shpilevskiy (1856), Kirkor (1858), Krachkovskiy (1869), etc.). Describing the customs and the way of life of Belarusian peasants of the time, researchers, as a rule, paid attention to the names of the diseases, diagnosis, prevention and treatment methods, symptoms and restrictions associated with different diseases. From the end of the nineteenth to early twentieth century, notions about folk veterinary appeared in the publications of Yanchuk (1889), Jeleńska (1892), Bulgakovskiy (1890), Romanov (1891, 1912), Nikiforovskiy (1897), Federowski (1897), Shein (1902), Dobrovol'skiy (1891, 1914), Bahdanovič (1995), Wereńko (1896) and others. They introduced in scientific circulation new field data regarding various ethnoveterinary aspects: people involved in treatment, folk beliefs about the causes of the diseases, verbal and non-verbal magical healing, plant and non-plant remedies used to treat livestock.

Significant contribution to the systematization and theoretical understanding of traditional concepts of Belarusians about the nature of diseases and ways of its treatment was made by Polish (Moszyński (1967), Pietkiewicz (2004), etc.) and Russian (Zelenin (1933), Popov (1912), etc.) researchers. For example, K. Mozsyński in his book devoted to the spiritual culture of the Slavs, analyzing traditional therapy methods, admitted that a special place there was given to different kinds of suggestions that, according to the scientist, explains the reason for the use of bitter, sharp, and thorny objects. The researcher has also emphasized the importance of sympathetic medicines – healing based on the principle of *similia similibus curantur* (like is cured by like) and *contratia contrariis curantur* (the opposite is cured with the opposite) (Mozsyński 1967).

In the first half of twentieth-century, the number of folklore and ethnographic research on ethnoveterinary and, more broadly, traditional treatment practices gradually ceased, since the interest in such issues, apparently, was not supported officially in Soviet science. Later, only a few "critical analyses" of ethnographic data on methods of traditional treatment from the Soviet period were published (Mińko 1962, 1969). Recently, research interest in Belarusian folk culture studies has shifted towards the cognitive aspects of ethnoveterinary knowledge – semantics of folk nominations and cultural models of diseases and its treatment (Valodzina 2001, 2004, 2007, 2009a, b, 2017), Shrubok (2015a, b, 2016b, c, 2017). Some aspects regarding remedies used by Belarusian peasants to treat livestock are recorded in the works of Sivurava (2009) and Šumski (2011). Ethnoveterinary knowledge of peasants

in the present Liubań region has been analyzed by Sõukand et al. (2017a, b). However, thus far no comprehensive and complex research on Belarusian ethnoveterinary medicine regarding both the use of traditional medicines and ritual practices of treatment, has been published.

16.3 General Concepts of Livestock Diseases and Treatment Methods

Folk concepts of animal diseases and treatment methods are similar to the concepts of human diseases (Alekseevsky 2010). According to traditional folk beliefs, diseases were perceived as something extraneous that penetrated into the familiar harmonic world of humans and their households and violated the order and balance. The list of animal diseases and their symptoms (that are mentioned in historical sources most often) includes infectious diseases (plague, erysipelas in pigs (*roža*)), parasitic diseases (lice in calves, helminth parasites in sheep (*matylicy*)), various kinds of superficial damage to the skin (ulcers, wounds, sores, scabs, abrasions, bites, scratches), diseases of internal organs and their symptoms (bloat in cattle (*uzduc'cie/viacha/pavuk*), rumination problems in cows (*žvaki nie žuje*), blood in urine in cows (*kryvaŭka*), pulmonary emphysema in horses (*dychaŭka/sap*), etc.), leg and hoof diseases, eye diseases (wall-eye in cattle and horses (*biaĺmo*) and others.

The Russian ethnolinguist Anatoliy Zhuravlev, analyzing folk names of livestock diseases used by Slavic people, considered that most of them could be divided into two groups: (1) descriptive nominations reflecting the symptom of the disease (for example, *kolka/koĺka – "prickling disease",* intestinal colic in horses) or its location (for example, *zavušnica/zaŭšyca – "behind-the-years disease"*, inflammation of the glands in pigs); (2) nominations explaining the cause of the disease, either natural (for example, *zakucie* – "*horseshoe disease*", the wound resulting from non-accurate horseshoeing) or supernatural (for example, a wide range of lexemes used for the nomination of "*an evil eye*" that, according to folk beliefs, some person can "put" on the animal causing disease – *ŭrok/zglaz/padumy/pryzor/prygavory*) (Zhuravlyov 1995).

Some of the folk names of livestock diseases are very hard to match with the corresponding names in official veterinary medicine, or even compose a clear and consistent picture of its symptoms. Thus one of the most often mentioned livestock diseases in the nineteenth to beginning of the twentieth century was *čemir/čemier,* which was usually defined as a horse disease that could also affect cattle and rarely people (Valodzina 2017). Regarding characteristic symptoms of the disease, the informants generally mentioned pain in the stomach and spasms, but there were also quite different explanations of *čemir/čemier,* for example as a tumor or rash. There is a quite similar situation with the other well-known term in folk veterinary nomenclature disease of horses and cattle named *pieralohi.* The descriptions of the disease in the dialect dictionaries and ethnographic literature are not very informative and

just point generally to stomach pain, cramps and convulsions. There is even less information about *patnicy*, the name of the disease that often appears in the folk veterinary charms together with *čemir/čemier* and *pieralohi,* which is most likely used to describe the excessive sweating occurring as a result of illness of the animal, and represents not the name of the disease but its symptom (Shrubok 2017). In this way, similarities of the diseases symptoms lead to the implication that peasants in many cases poorly distinguish between differences in some diseases and may not differentiate between them.

The identification of the etiology of the disease is often a decisive step in determining treatment strategies due to the mythological postulate of the identity of the essence of things to its genesis (Valodzina 2007). Though peasants sometimes noted rational causes for some illnesses (e.g. cold, bad nutrition or udder injury for mastitis), in many cases they attributed the illnesses to supernatural forces. One of the most typical causes of livestock diseases, especially those connected with reducing cow milk production, according to the folk beliefs, is "an evil eye" and other kind of negative magical effect on health of the animal.

An important role in the etiology of many livestock diseases concerns the idea of demonological and chthonic worlds in relation to the world of humans and their households. According to local beliefs, chthonic creatures usually appeared harmful to domesticated animals and were often endowed with characteristics of the demonological beings that could cause diseases in livestock (a witch can turn into a frog or snake and milk a cow in such appearance, a weasel can ride a horse at night causing the diseases, etc.) (Zhuravlyov 1995). Thus, one of the most typical explanations for mastitis in cows is malefic activity of animal and bird deemed chthonic (weasel and swallow (Gura 1997)); mytho-semantic of bloat in cows (*uzduc′cie/viacha/pavuk*) is associated with pathogenic potencies of chthonic world representatives (the spider or mouse), etc.

Significant folk beliefs regarding the health of the cattle, namely, belief that some humans can influence cattle health through magic, belief in interaction between people and more powerful creatures (spirits, mythological owners of loci), have a function that goes beyond proper therapy and maintenance of health. In the mythological world outlook system the way out of the crisis caused by the disease was seen in setting relations with the environment through the contact with the disease and sacred assistants. Traditional ritual systems of treatment and preventing diseases in livestock unite various verbal, actional elements as well as different kinds of apotropes.

Despite the semantic and formal diversity of folk veterinary rituals, they are based on particular models or patterns, distinguished by the presence of similar semantic features, the relative stability of the structure and the identity of the inner mold. A significant part of the empirical material falls within the classification of healing rituals suggested by T. Valodzina, who defined models and motifs of *identification of the disease in the body, removal of it from the body, departure of the disease* and its *destruction*. The model determines the requisite chronotope and, to a certain extent, the verbal accompaniment of the healing ritual (Valodzina 2009b). Thus the model with semantic of destruction dictates the use of objects with sharp, stabbing, burning

characteristics (for example, to treat mastitis in cows the cow was milked through sharp metal attributes (knife, needles, etc.) (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Shein 1902)); within the model of departure of the disease particular attention is paid to the loci, wherefrom and where the disease is exiled (usually it is various types of boundaries, such as the manor fence, threshold, gate, walls of the barn (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Wereńko 1896; Polacki etnahrafičny zbornik 2006), and places with marked negative semantics ("In the case of an evil eye, put three coals and three needles and transfuse <the milk of ill cow through it – A.Sh.> three times, and pour it out in a dirty place" "Еслі зурочыца, кладеш тры вголька і тры голкі і тры раза пропускаеш і вымываеш у гразное место" (Data base "Polesskiy arkhiv": recorded by A n.d.)).

However, the list of basic models of rituals used to maintain health and treat livestock will not be completed without *apotropaic* model and *producing* milk yield model, which play a vital role in the ritual system of healing the cattle because illness itself has been less important than the loss of milk for peasant farmers. The apotropes used in ethnoveterinary ritual practices could be listed practically endlessly, but the unifying characteristic there is in their apotropaic and/or productive semantics. Universal remedies used in Belarusian ethnoveterinary include bread, salt, water, often consecrated in the church, attributes made of iron (especially needles, horseshoe), clothes of the owners of the animal, etc. (for example Fig. 16.1).

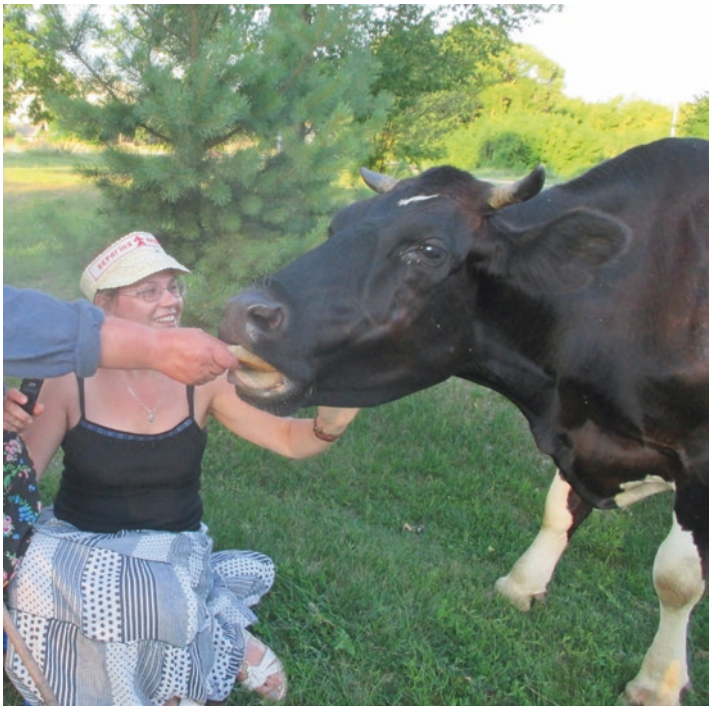

Fig. 16.1 Women feed bread to a cow to increase milk yield, spelling the charm. Slaŭharad district, Mahilioŭ region. (Photograph: T. Valodzina)

Fig. 16.2 Willow branches used for the first pasture rite (Liepieĺ district, Viciebsk region). (Photograph: S. Vyskvarka)

Healing rituals are often guided by natural phenomena (solar or lunar cycles) and socio-cultural events – especially the holidays. Orientation on certain holidays is more typical for preventative rituals, the purpose of which is to affect the animal's health in the future. The first pasture rite occupies a central place in the cycle of calendar preventive livestock rites. In the Belarusian folk calendar, the first pasture rite is timed to St. George's Day (sixth of May), as St George is thought to be the patron of livestock. On this day in different parts of Belarus, praying to St. George in churches, ritual rounds of flocks, and celebration dinners take place; the owners of the cattle strive to honor the shepherds, etc.

The most widespread ritual practices regarding preserving and improving livestock health performed on St. George's Day were beating the animal with a willow branch blessed in the church previously (Fig. 16.2), rolling an egg over the animal, transferring cattle through various kinds of apotropes laying under the threshold, etc. (Shrubok 2015c).

16.4 Charm-Healing and Belarusian Ethnoveterinary Charms

Treatment with verbal charms and incantations, embodied in the practice of ritual healing, was historically assumed to be an important way to eliminate the disease along with different types of remedies. Earlier folklore collector Cz. Pietkewicz

remarked that "treatment with charms exists everywhere and belief in them was unusually high" (Piatkievič 2004). This type of treatment was provided by the healers, who were thought to possess magical power, although common peasants also had some proportion of charm-healing knowledge. Thus, a huge part of the charms used to treat cow diseases that were recorded by the folklorists recently seems to have been spoken by the people who didn't consider themselves healers.

Belarusian ethnoveterinary charms constitute a branched corpus of texts aimed at getting rid of livestock diseases and maintaining their health. The corpus consists of charms treating cattle, horses and pig diseases along with the charms treating diseases common to animals and humans (rabies, wall-eye, a joint dislocation, "an evil eye"). Charms used for maintenance and reproduction of health of the cattle are the most numerous and developed complex in the whole system of Belarusian folk veterinary charms. Their specific feature is the general idea of increasing milk production in cows that can be traced in the various motif implementations in charms aimed to heal mastitis, "evil eye" and other diseases. In general, the boundaries between different functional groups of the charms healing livestock diseases are poorly reflected by the people who often use the same text or texts with similar motifs in different cases (Shrubok 2016c). A special place in the folk veterinary charms system belongs to verbal texts used for healing pigs, which are relatively rarely used in ethnoveterinary practice of Belarusians due to the ethnocultural reason – the widespread taboo against using charms for pig healing (Shrubok 2016a). At the same time there is a certain type of charms fixed in the territory of Western Belarus, which most likely came to Belarusian folklore tradition from the West through Poland, meanwhile in the East of Belarus the practice of fattening pigs using appropriate verbal charms is widespread.

The most diverse and numerous group in the whole Belarusian ethnoveterinary charms corpus is the charms used to heal cows, that can be explained not only by the very important role of cows in the traditional economy but also by their high symbolic status in the culture (Fig. 16.3).

Illnesses that reduce milk yield (most commonly mastitis) are treated with charms more often than any other cow diseases, because illness itself is less important than the loss of milk for peasant farmer. Many of these charms are preventative that are spoken before or at the time of a special occasion, i.e. first pasture rite or after calving and so on.

Belarusian charms for healing livestock mostly belong to East Slavic charms tradition, thus being spelling they are every time more or less accurately reconstructed by their plot, genre and thematic model with the help of different cliché belonging to the whole genre fund. Russian ethnolinguist and folklorist T. Agapkina defined and described two universal motif types of East Slavic healing charms (Agapkina 2010). First of them is "In the mythological center (in the open field, in the blue sea and on a white stone) there is somebody (the Virgin …), who treats X or in some other way helps to get rid of the disease". In these type of charms, there are descriptions of the mythological center, where the main character of the charm destroys or expels the disease, protects the cured animal or illuminates the danger, returns or increases milk yield of the cow, etc. For example, "There is a stone on

Fig. 16.3 Gravestone with the image of the woman and the cow. Ryžoŭ village, Bychaŭ district, Mahilioŭ region. (Photograph: A. Liaškievič)

the sea, there is a church on the stone. There is a throne in the church, a girl seats on the throne. Black eyes, grey eyes, blue eyes, deep blue eyes. I have called three apostles, have expelled evil eyes from a cow and have poured it with milk (Repeat three times)" "На моры камень, на камні цэркаў стаіць. У той цэркве прастол стаіць, на прастоле дзевіца сядзіць. Вочы чорные, вочы серыя, вочы галубые, вочы сініе. Тры апосталы прызывала, з кароўкі ўрокі зганяла і малачком аблівала. (Паўтарыць 3 разы)" (Archive of Institution of Art History, Ethnography and Folklore of National Academy of Sciences of Belarus 1989).

The second universal motif type – is the illumination of the disease. The core of this type is the motifs that are based on the description of the disease (nomination of the disease, list of the sources and characteristics of the disease), as well as the expulsion of the disease (Agapkina 2010). For example, "Three girls walked, all of them were beauties. The first one was a laundress, the second – a seamstress, the third was embroidering the shirt of Lord God and chanting against the evil eye in my cow. <The girl> expelled <the evil eye> from her (cow's) legs, from her horns, from her udder to wilted withes, where the cock's voice does not reach, where sacred bread does not rise". "Шло тры дзевіцы і ўсе красавіца. Одна прачка, друга швачка, трэця Господу Богу сорочку вышывала, з моей кароўкі ўрокі выговорала. З яе ног, з яе рог, з яе вымені, з яе раковіны на ніцые лозы

ссылала, дзе пеўнеў голос не доходзіць, святы хлеб не родзіць" (Private archive of T. Valodzina n.d.).

The charms are often included in complex magical rituals and accompanied by the actions that strengthen the effect of healing. For example, "My cow Zorka has calved, strew herself with self-seed poppy, fenced herself off with the iron fence. As no one can collect this poppy, thus no one can take away milk from the cow. As no one can break the fence, thus no one can curse my cow. (Go around the cow three times, strew her and pronounce.)" "Мая карова Зорка ацялілася, самасеяным макам абсыпалася, жалезным тынам агарадзілася. Як гэтага маку нікому не падабраць, так у гатай каровы нікому малака не атбраць. Як гэтага тыну ніхто не пераломя, так маю карову ніхто не перагавора. (Тры раза абайці карову абсыпаць і сказаць)"(Tradycyjnaja mastackaja kuĺtura bielarusaŭ 2001).

16.5 Plant and Non-plant Remedies Used to Treat Livestock

Belarusian peasants did not use only the services of "magical professionals" to treat the livestock, but tried to treat it by themselves, using traditional preventive and curative remedies, important parts of which were made of plants. Plant remedies were brewed or used as a dry powder, which was added to the feed or was poured on wounds; dried plants were also used for fumigating the cattle.

The most commonly used wild plant taxa mentioned in historical literature and modern researches are *Acorus calamus* L. (aip, aep, плюшнік / *air, aer, pliušnik*)[1] for treatment of stomach disease in cows and redwater disease in cattle (Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896); *Alisma plantago-aquatica* L. (шальнік /šaĺnik) to treat rabies (Romanov 1891; Dobrovoľskiy 1914); *Alnus* sp. (альха, вольха, алешына, альшына, алешнік */aĺcha, voĺcha, aliešyna, aĺšyna, aliešnik*) to treat wounds and scrofula in cattle (Jeleńska 1892; Wereńko 1896), diarrhoea in cows and pigs (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Sõukand et al. 2017a); *Artemisia absinthium* L. (палын, палыннік */palyn, palynnik*) to treat blood in urine and digestive problems in cows, helminthic disease in sheep, diarrhoea in chickens, cows and pigs as well as disinfectant for home animals (Piatkievič 2004; Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017a); *Artemisia vulgaris* L. (былічка, чарнабыльнік, чорны палын, быльнік / *bylička, čarnaby'ĺnik, čorny palyn, byĺnik*) for blood in urine in cow treatment (Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017a); *Ledum palustre* L. (багун, багон, багоўнік, буячнік/*bahyn, bahon, bahoŭnik, bujačnik*) to treat infectious diseases (Wereńko 1896), scabs and pulmonary emphysema in horses, rinderpest, diarrhoea in calves and cows (Piatkievič 2004; Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017a); *Pinus sylvestris* L. (сасна, хвоя/*sasna, chvoja*) was indicated for treatment of a horse disease named *zubaŭka* (Wereńko 1896), rinderpest and wounds in cows (Piatkievič 2004; Sõukand

[1] Here and below in branches there are local names of the taxa given in Cyrillic and Latin transcription.

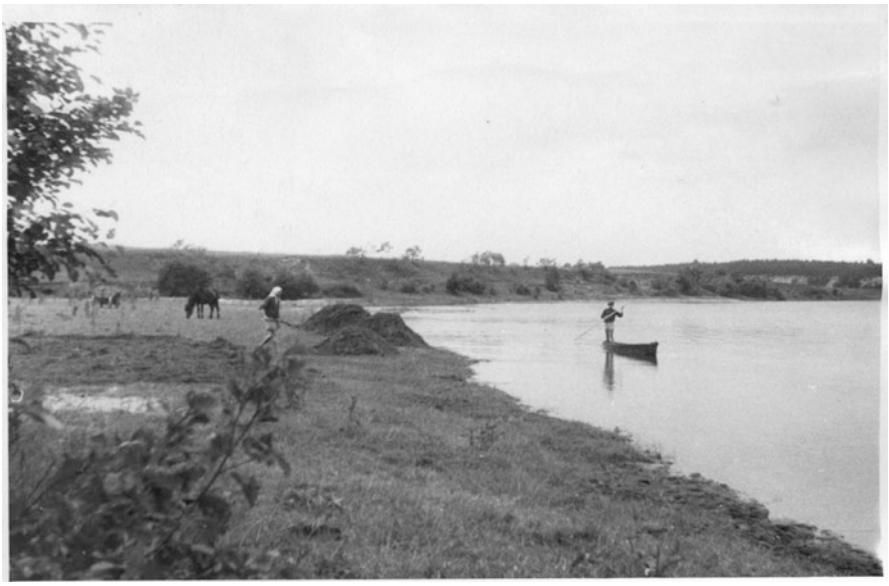

Fig. 16.4 Harvesting of grass growing in the river Vilija for cows feeding in 1954. Byctryca village, Astraviec district, Hrodna region. Archive of Institution of Art History, Ethnography and Folklore of National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. (Photo library, photo №39a)

et al. 2017a). There are some data demonstrating that, for the purpose of increasing milk yield in cows, grass growing in rivers (*maйra, raska*) was used (Fig. 16.4).

Such commonly known cultivated plants noted in nineteenth century literature as *Nicotiana sp.* (тытунь, табак/*tytuń, tabak*), which was marked as the remedy for helminthic disease in sheep (Federowski 1897), snakes bite (Wereńko 1896), scabs in horses (Piatkievič 2004), etc. or *Cannabis sativa L.* (каноплі, канапля/*kanopli, kanaplia*) used to treat helminthic disease in sheep (Piatkievič 2004; Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896), scabs in dogs (Wereńko 1896) and some horse diseases (Romanov 1891; Wereńko 1896) were officially banned to be grown in home-gardens in different periods of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Sõukand et al. 2017b). The other cultivated plants used to treat home animals include *Linum usitatissimum L.* (лён/lion) used for the treatment of blood in urine in cattle (Piatkievič 2004), rumination problems and constipation in cows as well as diarrhea in cows and pigs (Sõukand et al. 2017b); *Calendula officinalis L.* (наготкі, календула/*nahotki, kaliendula*) as the prevention of miscarriage in cows (Piatkievič 2004); *Allium cepa L.* (цыбуля, лук/*luk, cybulia*) used for helminthic and infectious diseases in cattle (Tyszkiewicz 1847; Polacki etnahrafičny zbornik 2006); *Allium sativum* (часнок, чосныk/*časnyk, česnok*) to treat sore tongue (Jeleńska 1892; Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896) and rumination problems in cows (Sõukand et al. 2017b); various vegetables (carrot and cabbage as the remedy for placental retention and rumination problems in cows (Federowski 1897; Sõukand et al. 2017b),

radish and horseradish to treat urine retention (Piatkievič 2004; Wereńko 1896), cucumber for rumination problems in cows (Sõukand et al. 2017b)); etc.

Non-plant remedies have historically dominated over both wild and cultivated plant remedies in Belarusian ethnoveterinary. The great part of them was household products (brines (Piatkievič 2004), salt (Piatkievič 2004; Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896), oil (Piatkievič 2004; Sõukand et al. 2017b), yeast (Romanov 1891; Sõukand et al. 2017b), kvass (Federowski 1897), soap (Sõukand et al. 2017b), lard (Jeleńska 1892; Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017b), beeswax (Wereńko 1896), etc.). Thus abdominal distension (*tympania ruminis*) in cows that often occurred because of eating fresh clover, especially with dew on it or which was wet after rain, or due to bad quality of fodder was treated by buckthorn broth, hemp or linseed oil, as well as cucumber brine (Šumski 2007). Various milk products (cow milk (Piatkievič 2004; Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017b), clabber (Romanov 1891; Wereńko 1896), sour cream (Jeleńska 1892; Wereńko 1896), liquid left after making curds (Romanov 1891; Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017b), and milk cream (Wereńko 1896)) were used to treat ungulate skin diseases, urination and digestive problems in cattle.

Eggs were not only used in producing and healing rituals, for example, when the egg was rolled over the animal (often with spelling the incantation "let the animal be such round and sleek as the egg is") and then given to a beggar (Romanov 1912; Shein 1902), but was also indicated as a remedy for rumination problems and constipation in cows (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Federowski 1897), wounds and sores (Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896), blood in urine in cows (Wereńko 1896) and diarrhoea in piglets (Sõukand et al. 2017b). Honey and birch tar application also played an important role in treating livestock diseases, being used to treat snakes bite (Wereńko 1896), sore tongue (Jeleńska 1892), scabs in pigs (Sõukand et al. 2017b), scrofula and malleus disease in horses (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Wereńko 1896), stomach ache in cows (Romanov 1912; Wereńko 1896), blood in urine in cows (Wereńko 1896), erysipelas suum and red fever in pigs (Shein 1902; Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017b) as well as rinderpest (Romanov 1912; Federowski 1897). Being mentioned in historical literature as the remedy for constipation in cows and *vusač* in horses (Romanov 1891; Wereńko 1896), in modern Belarusian ethnoveterinary vodka/moonshine is used more broadly (Sõukand et al. 2017b).

Animal-based remedies are the most diverse and numerous group of non-plant remedies. The list of animals and parts of their bodies used in Belarusian ethnoveterinary includes bulls (Wereńko 1896), pigs (Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896), deers (Federowski 1897), a variety of small mammals (moles (Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896), polecats (Wereńko 1896), rabbits (Wereńko 1896), minks (Dobrovoľskiy 1914)), insects (honeybees (Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896), *Geotrupes stercorarius* (Wereńko 1896)), birds (domesticated (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Wereńko 1896) and wild (Wereńko 1896)), amphibians (frogs, toads (Wereńko 1896)), reptiles (snakes (Federowski 1897)) (Fig. 16.5).

Although it is often not clear how exactly the animal or part of its body was used, the use of such kinds of remedies usually aims to "transfer" diseases from the domesticated animal to the other. The use of some substances obtained from human

Fig. 16.5 A body of a killed bird used as an apotrope to protect the cattle. Archive of institution of art history, ethnography and Folklore of National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. (Photo library)

and animal bodies (urine (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Romanov 1891; Federowski 1897; Sõukand et al. 2017b), feces or droppings (Nikiforovskiy 1897; Federowski 1897; Wereńko 1896; Sõukand et al. 2017b)) is often relied on a folk belief that diseases can be "expelled" from the body with help by any sort of uncleanness (Valodzina 2009b). However, the present study shows that among animal-based remedies, mainly practical and quite rational uses have continued to be used (Sõukand et al. 2017b).

16.6 Conclusions

Ethnoveterinary practices can be understood and interpreted appropriately only within their cultural context including the role of the animal within practical spheres of culture, primarily husbandry system, mythology and folk beliefs connected with issues of illness and health care. Traditional ritual practices of treatment and preventing diseases in livestock unite various verbal and actional elements as well as different kinds of apotropes. Despite their great variety, Belarusian ethnoveterinary practices are based on common folk beliefs concerning causes of livestock diseases and method of their treatment. Regarding a traditional worldview, disease was perceived as the disruption of established order and balance, the intervention of chaos into the regular world of peasants. Most often, ritual practices aimed to treat

animal diseases follow certain models such as identification of the disease into the body, removal of it from the body, departure of the disease and its destruction, as well as apotropaic and producing milk yield models. Verbal charms and incantations used to treat livestock were often included in more complex rituals and played a major role in treatment of cow diseases, and diseases thought to be caused by supernatural causes (primarily "an evil eye").

Non-plant remedies are of great importance in Belarusian ethnoveterinary systems and include mostly various household products, although wild plants are almost equally important, while cultivated plants are less utilized. However, treatment of domestic animals with the help of both plant and non-plant remedies is less commonly described in ethnographic literature than magical methods used by Belarusian peasants.

The wide range of research questions such as the mechanisms of the evolution of Belarusian ethnoveterinary knowledge, regional provenance of different practices, interaction of book and traditional knowledge regarding treatment livestock, differences and similarities between ethnoveterinary knowledge and practices of various religious and ethnic groups living in Belarus, etc. still remains uninvestigated.

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