Traditional systems for preventing and treating animal diseases in Sri Lanka

H.D. WASANTHA PIYADASA *

Summary: Systems for preventing and treating animal diseases have been employed in Sri Lanka since ancient times, long before the advent of modern veterinary science. Many such methods have been used, mainly in ruminants but also in trained elephants.

Records of animal treatments can be found in historical documents. The first recorded treatment is that of the elephant 'Kadol Etha' belonging to King Dutugemunu (161-137 BC). Later, the physician King Buddhadasa (AD 340-368) is reported to have operated on a snake. The methods and experience gained by practitioners have usually been passed on in secrecy from father to son. However, records on ola leaf manuscripts are available for consultation in the National Museum and the Ayurvedic Research Institute, while others are in the possession of native veterinary practitioners. Approximately 2,000 practitioners are scattered throughout the island; the majority treat animals on a part-time basis. The marking of animals using brands in symbolic shapes, inhalation of medicinal fumes and oral medication are the common treatment methods.


INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has a tradition of rearing animals for agricultural purposes since the beginning of civilisation on the island. In the past, the country was famous throughout the civilised world for its pearls, gems and spices (including medicinal plants).

Sri Lanka lies in the tropics between 5°N 79°E and 10°N 82°E, and covers an area of 65,000 km². The climate is determined by the interception of the north-east and south-west monsoons by the central mountains. The climate varies from temperate in elevated areas to arid in low country areas. Paddy cultivation is the main agricultural pursuit. Traditionally, cattle and buffalo were used in farming as a source of power. During the colonial era, plantation agriculture (coffee, tea, rubber and coconuts) was introduced and became the main source of foreign exchange earnings. Animals have been reared on the island for a variety of purposes, including agriculture, warfare and sport. Elephants from the Sri Lankan jungles and imported Arabian horses were used in wars. Trained elephants were used for heavy work in irrigation, haulage, forestry and construction activities. Occasionally, elephants have been used for ploughing.
The rearing and utilisation of these animals involved the treatment of any diseases and injuries which occurred. The earlier inhabitants of Sri Lanka came from India, bringing with them the Ayurvedic system of medicine. The same system may have been practised in both human and animal medicine. The rich tropical and even subtropical flora of Sri Lanka provided a wide variety of medicinal plants. At present, approximately 250 species of medicinal plants, and 28 mineral and animal products are used in the native system of animal treatment (1).

A recent survey found that approximately 2,000 native veterinary practitioners are engaged in animal treatment throughout the country, and that the majority practise veterinary medicine on a part-time basis (1).

Historical records refer to the treatment of wounds caused by molten metal thrown at ‘Kadol Etha’, the famous elephant of King Dutugemunu, when this animal attacked the gates of an enemy fort (161-137 BC). Later, the physician King Buddhadasa (AD 340-368) is reported to have operated on a snake which was suffering from a swelling. King Buddhadasa also established animal hospitals and physicians to treat animals in his kingdom. King Pandukabahaya (4th century BC) and King Parakramabahu I (AD 1153-1186) also encouraged the treatment of animals during their respective reigns (6).

The traditional methods of treatment and experience gained by native practitioners are kept in strict confidence, and this knowledge has generally been passed from father to son, throughout the ages. Ola leaf manuscripts exist, which are 300-400 years old and have come down through families, maintaining the knowledge as a secret. In this system, the son learns while assisting his father.

These books and ola leaf manuscripts are now available in the National Museum in Colombo, and in the Ayurvedic Research Institute. Some are also in the possession of native practitioners (Table I). Other such manuscripts may also exist, in the possession of practitioners and in other institutions (2, 3; K. Perera, personal communication; L.P.P. Perera, personal communication).

SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES

Traditionally, animals have been grouped on the basis of conformation, behaviour and the purpose for which they are used. On this basis, cattle are divided into seven families and elephants into ten families. Native veterinary practitioners believe that certain of such families have a propensity to certain diseases. They also believe that diseases are caused by an imbalance of body humours: vaa (wind), pitha (bile) and seme (phlegm). Native veterinary practitioners have recorded the existence of 4,448 cattle diseases and 472 elephant diseases in the ola leaf books. The groups of diseases recognised by native practitioners are listed in Table II, along with common signs and symptoms.

Native practitioners believe that the behaviour of animals, in exhibiting the desire to eat certain plants, has a connection with certain diseases. For example, if an elephant eats Erythrina variegata leaves in preference to other leaves, the animal is believed to be infested with worms. If the elephant eats Capsicum plants, this indicates a digestive disturbance (8).

When disease strikes rapidly in a population of animals, this is believed to be due to the anger of the gods, and treatment is given accordingly. However, some native practitioners do not believe this explanation.
TABLE I
Palm leaf manuscripts and old books detailing native practices for the treatment and restraint of animals in Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gave Rathnaya</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>17th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasthi Yoga Shatakeya and three other manuscripts</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Methods of restraining elephants</td>
<td>17th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave Vedha Potha</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>17th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave Chikithsawa</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>17th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave Siddhi Save Chikithsara</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave Prathicara</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave Vedekeame</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ath Veda Potha</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of elephants</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Athuntha Vedakam</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of elephants and tuskers</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ath Veda Potha</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Treatment of elephants</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasthi Chikithsawa</td>
<td>Ola leaf</td>
<td>Clinical aspects of elephant treatment</td>
<td>18th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave Rathnaya</td>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Rathnaya</td>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave Viyadhi Chikithsa</td>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>Treatment of cattle/buffalo</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

When the native veterinary practitioner is informed of a sickness in an animal, he decides whether he needs to examine the animal before being able to prescribe or dispense some medicine. During his visit, the practitioner examines the animal, questioning the owner if further information is required. In deciding on treatment, the native practitioner takes into account the severity of the condition; this may involve examining the pulse (normally in the jugular vein) and the appearance of the eyes. The practitioner then adopts one or more traditional methods of treatment. In most cases, he prescribes medicines and describes how these should be administered.

Most diseases are treated by administering decoctions, or fresh mixtures of juices from medicinal plants. In the case of treatments involving branding, fumigation and chanting, the practitioner performs these himself.
### Native method of classification of animal diseases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of disease or group of diseases</th>
<th>Animal species affected</th>
<th>Signs and symptoms</th>
<th>No. of diseases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veppu</td>
<td>Ruminants</td>
<td>Shivering, Fever, Locked jaw, Breathing difficulties, Cornea invisible</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adduppan</td>
<td>Ruminants</td>
<td>Oedema (on head, neck, legs, etc.), Fever, Salivation, Loss of appetite, Unconsciousness, Constipation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iluppu (metabolic diseases)</td>
<td>Ruminants</td>
<td>Lack of coordination, Rotation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veppu and adduppan</td>
<td>Elephants</td>
<td>Similar to those in cattle</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannali</td>
<td>All species</td>
<td>Ear lesions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases of young animals</td>
<td>All species</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoof diseases</td>
<td>Ruminants</td>
<td>Hoof lesions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athisara</td>
<td>All species</td>
<td>Dysentery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasangatha (contagious diseases)</td>
<td>All species</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounds</td>
<td>All species</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ORAL MEDICATION**

Decoctions, fresh mixtures of juices from medicinal plants, fermented medicinal mixtures (*arista*) and boluses are the types of oral medicines used in native veterinary treatment (4; K. Perera, personal communication; L.P.P. Perera, personal communication). Decoctions are prepared according to the prescription, and the whole plant or plant portions, such as leaves, root (rhizome), stem, flowers or bark are used to prepare medicines. The medicine is administered in a single dose or divided into several doses over a few days (1). Some prescriptions and indications are given below.

**Decoctions**

*Prescription for bloat and constipation in ruminants*

Make a decoction of the following ingredients and drench in divided doses (4):

- *Paspalum scrobiculatum* (seed)
- *Plectranthus zeylanicas* (leaf)
- *Allium sativum* (tuber)
- *Arbus precatorius* (leaf)
- *Cardiospermum halicacabum* (leaf)
- *Asparagus racemosus* (leaf)
- *Gmeluna asiatica* (leaf).

**Treatment for red-coloured urine**

Prepare juice of *Aloe vera* leaf, mix this with a cup of sesame oil and drench (4).

**Treatment for diarrhoea**

Grind equal parts of the following medicines and squeeze out the juice:

- *Jatropha glandulifora* (leaf)
- *Sida codifolia* (root)
- *Treblus asper* (leaf).

Mix with a cup of sesame oil, citrus juice, juice of *Zingiber officinale* (ginger) and drench.

**Treatment for constipation**

Crush the following ingredients, make a concentrated decoction by boiling with water and drench:

- *Paspalum scrobiculatum* (leaf)
- *Plectranthus zeylanicas* (whole plant)
- *Allium sativum* (tuber)
- *Arbus precatorius* (leaf)
- *Cardiospermum halicacabum* (whole plant)
- *Asparagus racemosus* (leaf)
- *Gmeluna asiatica* (leaf).

**Medicinal boluses**

Medicinal boluses are used in all animal species to treat many conditions. Citrus fruit juice is commonly used to prepare the bolus.

**Medicinal bolus for de-worming of calves**

Grind equal amounts of the following ingredients:

- *Citrus aurantifolia* (young leaf)
- *Citrus sinensis* (young leaf)
- *Atalantia ceylanica* (young leaf)
- *Azadirachta indica* (young leaf)
- *Vitex negundo* (young leaf)
- *Caesalipinia bonduc* (young leaf)
- *Gyrinops walla* (young leaf)
- *Cannabis sativa* (young leaf)
- *Monordica charantia* (young leaf).

Mix with a small amount of copper sulphate, make a bolus and administer (U.G.J.S. Wickramasooriya, personal communication).

**Prescription for colic and worm infestation in elephants**

Grind equal parts of the following ingredients, mix with sodium sulphate (*sahida lunu*) and administer (8):
– *Citrus aurantifolia* (young leaf)
– *Citrus sinensis* (young leaf)
– *Atalantia ceylanica* (young leaf)
– *Azadirachta indica* (young leaf)
– *Vitex negundo* (young leaf).

**INHALATION OF MEDICINAL FUMES**

Inhalation of medicinal fumes is another method of treating and preventing diseases in all species of animals, including elephants. Dried coconut shell or hard firewood is burnt to provide red-hot charcoal in a clay vessel. Dried medicinal mixtures in powder form are sprinkled onto the charcoal, causing the powder to burn and produce smoke. This smoke contains many volatile organic compounds, which the sick animal is allowed to inhale. Sometimes, the brazier is taken around the animal to expose the skin to the fumes. This technique is similar to modern fumigation. Native veterinary practitioners use whole plants or plant portions, and many organic materials of animal origin to create strong medicinal fumes. In practice, the animal is partly covered with gunny bags (coarse sacking) or mats to facilitate inhalation (Fig. 1). Commonly, medicinal fumigation is accompanied by chanting. This method is normally used to treat animals which are suffering from indigestion, constipation, colic, bloat and anuria. Fumigation is also used to treat maggot-infested wounds (4; K. Perera, personal communication; L.P.P. Perera, personal communication) by the method described below.

**Fig. 1**

Medicinal fumigation for a sick elephant
A dolomite stone is kept on a fire until hot and then placed in a vessel containing juice of the *Nymphaca skallata* leaf. The resulting vapour is allowed to touch the wound (4).

A common prescription for use in such treatment is the following:
- Solanum spp. (leaf)
- Datus melel (seed)
- Brassica integrifolia (seed)
- Capsicum spp. (seed)
- Dried coconut kernel.

Crush the above ingredients and mix with margosa oil, then sprinkle on red-hot charcoal and allow the animal to inhale the fumes.

At least twenty-one different materials of plant or animal origin are used for medicinal fumigation, including the following:
- Cuminum cyminum (seed)
- Cinamonum zeylanicum (bark, leaf)
- Piper longum (seed)
- Piper nigrum (seed)
- Vitex negundo (leaf)
- Oeinum locilicum (leaf)
- Azadirachta indica (leaf, seed oil)
- powdered antler from deer
- powdered ivory
- bat faeces
- hair
- sloughed skin of reptiles.

**HOT-IRON BRANDING OF SYMBOLS**

Branding of symbols at various sites on the body of the animal is another method of treatment, mainly used in ruminants. Common indications for this method are indigestion, constipation, emaciation and colic. In native veterinary practice, an iron hook or rod is used to brand designs on specific sites or points. The selection of sites, the extent of branding and the particular design used depend on the disease and the severity of the condition.

From native veterinary books, at least 168 such symbols are known to be used for branding (7). This practice is commonly used in ruminants and occasionally in elephants. Some of the symbols are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Some indications and disease conditions for specific symbols are shown in Figure 4.

**INSTILLATION AND INSUFFLATION OF MEDICINES**

Instillation of herbal medicines into the eyes, ears or nostrils is a method used to treat many conditions. Medicinal mixtures used for this type of treatment are very strong (4; D.W. Kannagara, personal communication).

**Instillation to the eyes**

*Prescription for diarrhoea in cattle*

Grind the following mixture and apply the juice in droplets into the eyes:
- Capsicum spp. (seed)
FIG. 2
Hot-iron branding symbols
(7)

FIG. 3
Hot-iron branding symbols
(7)
Some symbols used for hot-iron branding by native veterinary practitioners in Sri Lanka

- Brassica integrifolia (seed)
- Zingiber officinale (rhizome)
- Desmodium spp. (leaf).

**Nasal instillation**

Nasal instillation and insufflation of medicines are practised in many conditions. Constipation with fever and salivation is an indication for installation of a medicinal mixture into the nostrils. Finely ground medicinal powder may also be insufflated into both nostrils. In practice, at least two to three tablespoonfuls of medicinal mixture are administered to each nostril.

**Prescription for constipation, fever and salivation in cattle**

Grind the following ingredients with juice of the *Moringa oleifera* root and squeeze out the liquid portion:

- Acalypha indica (leaf)
- Monordica dioicia (leaf)
- Allium sativum (tuber).
Administer approximately two tablespoonfuls of this liquid by installation into both nostrils.

**Instillation of medicines for ear diseases**

Native veterinary practitioners claim that the same ear diseases occur in all animal species. The grouping of ear diseases is based on visible changes occurring in the ear, such as oedema, nature of the discharge, cracking of the ear lobe, etc. Instillation of an aqueous or oil-based medicinal preparation and smearing of the preparation on the skin are common practices. Coconut oil or caster oil is normally used as the base for preparations (2, 4, 7).

The two treatments described below may be used in ear infections:

a) Instillation of *Aloe vera* leaf juice into the ears (4).

b) Crush equal parts of the following ingredients, squeeze out the juice and mix with coconut milk:

- *Leea indica* (leaf)
- *Murraeja koenigii* (leaf)
- *Solanum surantense* (leaf)

Boil the mixture until an oily extract is obtained, and pour this into the ears.

**APPLICATION OF MEDICINAL PASTE**

Oedema at various sites due to fractures or haematomas is a condition commonly encountered in all animal species, and native practitioners treat such conditions by smearing medicinal paste on the affected areas. The treatment is usually combined with another treatment method and is continued for a week or more (4; K. Perera, personal communication; L.P.P. Perera, personal communication).

The owner of the sick animal collects the ingredients according to the prescription. If the treatment is to be applied on the eyes (a practice known as *anjenema*), strong medicines are used and treatment is performed by the practitioner himself. This method is usually performed as a secondary treatment in seriously ill ruminants and even in elephants (8). Indications and treatments for various animal species are shown in Table III (4, 7; D.W. Kannagara, personal communication; L.P.P. Perera, personal communication).

The principle behind this form of treatment may be to give a very strong stimulus to the sick animal.

**INCANTATION AND OTHER TREATMENT METHODS**

Incantation is often combined with inhalation of medicinal fumes. The method is applied commonly when a native practitioner notices that a disease is spreading rapidly among the animals, and neither the farmer nor the practitioner knows the cause or means of transmission of the disease. In certain disease outbreaks where mortality is high, the farmer and the practitioner may both believe that the disease is due to the anger of the gods. However, such beliefs are now being dispelled.
When the native practitioner is informed of heavy morbidity and mortality in a herd of animals, he makes arrangements to separate the sick animals or the entire herd from the other animals. Sometimes, the animal owner is sufficiently experienced to do this himself. A fence is planted (consisting partly of medicinal plants) to separate the animals. The affected animals or the entire herd are then treated by incantation of ‘mantras’ together with medicinal fumigation (5).

Medicinal fumes are allowed to spread thickly among the animals and around the periphery (Fig. 5).

**SOME COMBINED TREATMENT METHODS FOR SPECIFIC CONDITIONS**

The following treatment may be administered for cracking of the skin of the udder:

- medicinal fumigation with a powdered mixture of *Brassica integrifolia* (seed), *Zingiber officinale* (rhizome), *Acorus calamus* (rhizome) and *Ocimum basilicum* (leaf)
- chanting with a pot of water and sprinkling the water on the udder.

During a disease outbreak, native veterinary practitioners may prescribe a small pouch of medicines to be tied to the neck of animals. In the case of suspected foot and mouth disease, oil of pig fat with *Ferula asafoetida* (resin) is used.

In another method, ‘enchanted’ thread is tied round the neck of each animal in the herd.
Incantation of ‘mantras’ and medicinal fumigation to prevent spread of diseases

The branding of designs or symbols on both flanks of the animal is practised as a preventive method in disease outbreaks.

A number of other traditions regarding specific practices and conditions are detailed below.

**Hoof disease**

When the hoof is affected with disease (perhaps foot and mouth disease), animals are kept in a muddy field daily for several days. This practice may serve to clean the wounds, keep flies away, prevent maggot infestation, or remove maggots if present.

**Disposal of placental tissue**

The placenta is believed to be a very unhygienic tissue and when it falls, this tissue is made into a bundle and hung on a banyan tree outside the village.

**Hoof cutting**

In a new-born calf, the farmer traditionally clips or shaves the soft cartilage of the hooves. This is believed to help the legs to develop in the manner most suitable for draught purposes.
**Castration**

To castrate the animal, take two sticks, place them cross-wise above the testes and rub them fast to damage the cord.

**Udder oedema (mastitis)**

Two methods are combined for the treatment of this condition: wet or dry fomentation, and smearing of medicinal paste on the affected area. Fomentation of the udder is practised, using herbs, to increase the circulation, and herbal pastes are then applied externally.

**‘Evil eye’ to the udder (cracking, blistering)**

A red-hot iron rod is plunged into a bowl of water, and this water is used to wash the udder.

**Reproduction**

Some farmers think that a cow should be mated with two different bulls. This may improve the fertility of the cow.

**Retention of milk**

The leaves of *Bannimia racemosus* are chopped together with grass and fed to the animal.

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**NATIVE TREATMENT PRACTICES IN ELEPHANTS**

In Sri Lanka, the elephant is the largest unit source of natural power, and has been used to develop civilisation from ancient times. Various diseases and injuries occurred during the period of capturing, domestication, training, controlling and utilisation of wild elephants. These conditions involved the use of treatments, some of which are described above. Native veterinary practitioners in Sri Lanka have grouped elephant diseases in a similar manner to cattle diseases (Table II) and, in addition, a number of specific disease conditions are recognised in suckling elephants.

**‘Pake’ disease**

‘Pake’ disease is a gangrenous condition affecting the foot pad, which may seriously debilitate elephants.

**‘Semen disease’**

The condition which native practitioners refer to as ‘semen disease’ is really an excitable period of the male elephant, which occurs during the breeding season. The behaviour of the animal changes and it becomes nervous. The owner of the animal ties the elephant to a tree for a few days and chants daily until the signs disappear. The animal is then taken to a river or canal for a bath.

**Impaction and constipation**

Impaction is a condition commonly occurring in elephants which have been consuming a large amount of fibre in their diet. A traditional treatment involves the daily inhalation of medicinal fumes for three days. The following medicines are used for this purpose:
- *Cinamonum zeylanicum* (stem, bark)
- *Azadirachta indica* (leaf, seed oil).

**Dehydration**

Dehydration of elephants due to continuous work over a long period is a condition which is treated by native practitioners. Water from the young king coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) is drenched as a treatment for this condition. Incantation is another method of treatment for dehydration, and for most other conditions in elephants, especially 'semen disease'.

**Other practices**

Smearing on the eyes or internal wall of the trunk of the animal is a method of treatment which provides strong stimulation. Hot-iron branding is also used for treating elephants, especially when severely ill. Dysentry of elephants (*ath, athisara*) is treated by the oral administration of medicinal mixtures (8; D.W. Kannagara, personal communication).

**CONTROL OF ELEPHANTS**

The methods used for controlling elephants are important in making the animals perform work. This is a matter for an experienced elephant handler (*mahout*). Normally, this art or technique is handed down from father to son. However, eighteen ola leaf manuscripts on the training and treatment of elephants exist in Sri Lanka. According to the native system, the elephant has ninety nerve centres which are manipulated by a goad or the heel of the elephant handler (5, 8).

**CONCLUSION**

Further investigations are needed on the effectiveness of the methods of diagnosis and treatment described in this paper. If they are found to be effective, more widespread use of these methods would considerably reduce the cost of treatment to farmers.

Modern science should attempt to identify the effective components of traditional veterinary medicines and practices. Components which are found to be effective should be developed using modern technology.

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Résumé : L'utilisation de méthodes de prévention et de traitement des maladies animales au Sri Lanka remonte à une époque ancienne, bien antérieure à l'avènement de la science vétérinaire moderne. Nombre de ces méthodes s'appliquaient essentiellement aux ruminants, mais également aux éléphants dressés.

On trouve dans les documents historiques plusieurs exemples de traitements prodigués aux animaux. Le premier cas mentionné est celui de l'éléphant « Kadol Etha » du roi Dutuguemunu (en 161-137 av. J.-C.). Plus tard, les textes rapportent l'opération d'un serpent par le médecin King Buddhadasa (340-368). Les secrets de ces méthodes, jalousement gardés, se transmettaient de père en fils. Certaines de ces pratiques ont cependant été rapportées dans des manuscrits sur feuilles d'ola, que l'on peut consulter au National Museum et à l'Ayurvedic Research Institute, ou qui sont conservés par des vétérinaires locaux. L'île compte environ 2 000 praticiens. La plupart soignent les animaux à temps partiel. Le marquage des animaux à l'aide de fers chauds aux formes symboliques, les fumigations et l'administration de médicaments par voie orale constituent les méthodes thérapeutiques les plus répandues.


SISTEMAS TRADICIONALES DE PREVENCIÓN Y TRATAMIENTO DE ENFERMEDADES ANIMALES EN SRI LANKA. - H.D. Wasantha Piyadasa.

Resumen: Desde la Antigüedad, mucho antes de la aparición de la ciencia veterinaria moderna, existen en Sri Lanka sistemas de prevención y de tratamiento de enfermedades animales. Muchos de estos métodos se aplican sobre todo a rumiantes, pero también a elefantes amansados.

Los documentos históricos muestran varios ejemplos de tratamientos de animales. El primer caso mencionado es el del elefante Kadol Etha, del rey Dutuguemunu (161-137 a.C.). Posteriormente, los textos se refieren a la operación de una serpiente por parte del médico King Buddhadasa (340-368). Estos métodos se han mantenido en general secretos y sólo se transmiten de padres a hijos. Sin embargo, algunas de estas prácticas son relacionadas en manuscritos en hojas de ola, que o bien se pueden consultar en el National Museum o en el Ayurvedic Research Institute, o bien son conservados por veterinarios locales. Hay en la actualidad 2.000 practicantes en la isla, que en su mayoría no se ocupan exclusivamente de la cura de animales. El herradero de animales con formas simbólicas, la fumigación y la administración de medicamentos por vía oral son los métodos terapéuticos más difundidos.

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