

# The Forgotten Veterinary Entrepreneurs of the 19th Century



**W**ellness, in the modern definition of the active pursuit of good health through healthy choices and health screenings, is a late 20th-century phenomenon. Although some late 19th-century veterinary entrepreneurs might have claimed their goal to be healthy animals, their primary goal was selling their products to a public worried about the economic losses caused by livestock diseases. Their names were known far and wide from the 1860s, but few people know them today.

Dr. Gilbert Hess of Ashland, Ohio; Dr. B.J. Kendall of Enosburgh Falls, Vermont; and Dr. A.C. Daniels of Boston, Massachusetts, are three examples of early veterinarian and physician entrepreneurs who developed products sold by mail order or by drug, dry goods and feed stores throughout North America. Some specialized in a single product, such as Kendall's Spavin Cure or Dr. Hess Udder Ointment, while others offered a wide range of products from feeds to "patent medicines." The products were often displayed in oak countertop display cabinets with colorful lithographed and embossed tin inserts; these cabinets regularly come up at auctions.

To market their products, most, if not all, produced small handbooks to aid owners in the diagnosis and treatment of their animals at home. At a time when trained veterinarians were scarce, these little books could be a useful source of information for animal care. They were also a source of misinformation, with some making claims for cures of diseases such as hog cholera or recommending treatments that were not only ineffective but harmful. The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 and subsequent prosecutions under that law in the next decade brought an end to many of these companies and their publications.

Although most of the handbooks specified treatment with the author's

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 By **Nancy Burford**  
 TAMU Associate Professor and the Veterinary  
 Collections Curator  
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products, there were exceptions. Dr. Kendall's "The Doctor at Home" described common ailments and offered recipes for the standard home remedies of the period for both man and beast, but when discussing treatment of lameness in any species, he recommended his Spavin Cure ointment.

"Dr. Hess' Practical Points for Farmers, Horsemen, Dairymen and Poultrymen" was another booklet that gave standard remedies of the day for many ailments while at the same time recommending the prevention of disease by feeding with Dr. Hess' Stock Food or supplementing feed with Dr. Hess Poultry Pan-a-ce-a.

Possibly the most prolific pamphlet producer was Dr. A.C. Daniels. Dr. Daniels started selling his livestock "cures" by wagon in 1878, and as his business grew, he moved into larger and larger manufacturing facilities in the Boston area. By 1892—the copyright date of the earliest Daniels booklet owned by the Medical Sciences Library—the last page was a long list of some of the wholesale agents for Dr. Daniels' products in the United States. In a 1911 pamphlet, a similar list had gone international with distributors as far away as China and India. Seeing a potential growth market, by 1907 Dr. Daniels added medicines for dogs and cats; he is credited with marketing the first catnip toys to encourage exercise for indoor cats.

The four booklets in the photograph were published between 1907 and 1911. "Our Moneymakers" and "The Horse" were aimed at the farmer; they covered the care and treatment of diseases in

horses, cattle, sheep and pigs. In all his booklets, Dr. Daniels included a final page that was a form to be filled out and sent to the company veterinarians for free advice. Each booklet stressed the importance of cleanliness in disease prevention, using "Daniels' Disinfectant Carbo-Negus," of course. Strangely, it was only in "The Dog" and "The Cat" that there were recommendations to consult a



veterinarian for some conditions; perhaps this reflected the willingness and ability of pet owners—as opposed to farmers—to call on professional advice.

Unlike many of his "patent medicine" contemporaries whose products were not actually patented, at least seven of Dr. Daniels' products were registered by the U.S. Patent Office in 1902. Of course, a patent was not a guarantee of efficacy. Dr. A.C. Daniels sold the business in 1914. By the 1960s, the company ceased making any products except for cat and dog toys; it is still in that business today. **TV**

*Nancy Burford is an Associate Professor and the Veterinary Collections Curator at the Medical Sciences Library of the University Libraries at Texas A&M University. She can be contacted at 979-845-1820 or [nburford@library.tamu.edu](mailto:nburford@library.tamu.edu).*