



Marjon Peirens (Independent Researcher, Deinze, Belgium) Feeding horses in ms. The Hague, Royal Library, 71 H 44

Ms. The Hague, Royal Library, 71 H 44 contains a 'scientific' view on how one handled horses in the Middle Ages. This Middle Dutch manuscript, defined as a hippiatric handbook, was written in the fifteenth century, probably in the northern part of the Low Countries and is a free translation of Laurentius Russius' († 1347) *Hippiatria sive marescalia*. The text provides information on how to treat all sorts of diseases and discomforts, and on the importance of feeding, caring, stabling and labouring horses in a correct way.

In my paper, I want to expand on two main themes. First, I would like to discuss how one fed horses in sickness and in health, in youth and age. For example, ms. 71 H 44 reads how it is considered better for horses to eat hay, than to graze grasses and herbs, since these are naturally 'heavier' and lead to humidity (linked to the four humours). Further we read that to stimulate conception, it is recommended to feed the mare and the stallion equally.

Second, I would like to discuss the writings of the *auctoritas* on food, and, more specifically, how some of those theories were believed to be valid for man as for horse. Ms. 71 H 44 reads "the great master Jerome says that in general illness and early death are caused by redundant food and drinks". Quite remarkably, this theory concerns both man and horse, since "the great masters all tell that in nature no animal is more alike to man than horses".

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