PART TWO

STRUCTURES OF KNOWLEDGE
CHAPTER THREE

THE MEDICAL MARKETPLACE FOR ANIMALS

As previously discussed, the discipline of medical history has experienced many changes over the past few decades. In human medicine, the major focus is now on the ways in which people understood, diagnosed and treated physical or mental disorders. For most historians, these studies are placed within the framework of a ‘medical marketplace’ consisting of various healers, treatments and medical products. This model includes what were once referred to as the traditional tripartite division of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, along with various types of quacks, clergymen, midwives, magical healers, herbalists, drug dealers and a host of other less categorical healers.1 The unifying factor behind these practitioners was that they all focused on the health of humans. Such anthropocentric attitudes, therefore, ignore the comparable range of practitioners and medical options for animals which I feel should be included under the heading of the medical marketplace.2

As with many other terms, there is some debate over whether ‘medical marketplace’ adequately describes the myriad of choices available. Many historians have argued that this infers a purely commercial scenario staffed by ‘qualified’ practitioners.3 According to English Common Law anyone could call themselves a healer, prescribe and administer

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