Modern works on the history of veterinary medicine prior to the founding of veterinary schools in the late eighteenth century frequently depict the early modern period in Germany as a time governed by the collected wisdom of stable-masters and prescriptive manuals by court-based equine tradesmen.¹ While this is true in part, it is by no means the whole story. Just as there were many medical practitioners of diverse backgrounds and specialities who treated humans at this time, there were numerous types of veterinary healthcare providers.² Even regarding horses, which had long been a primary source of power and prestige for local and great lords, veterinary knowledge was not just limited to elites. Nobles neither mandated the direction of veterinary trades nor monopolised the practice and production of veterinary knowledge in everyday society. In fact, a very different perspective about the production of veterinary knowledge emerges when farriers and large-smiths, the two main trade identities that specialised in veterinary medicine outside the courts, are included in the early modern veterinary community. By recognising the major role that smith guilds played in equine healthcare in the daily lives of farmers and urban dwellers, one not only revises the general history of veterinary medicine but also reveals that equine-focused smith guilds influenced the direction of veterinary trades and controlled the development of veterinary knowledge much more than either court farriers or noblemen did. Furthermore, the hippological trade identities that seem so clear in prescriptive court-based literature fall apart when examined alongside historical documentation of farrier guilds (for example, archival records, guild books and objects of material culture). Accepting the

¹ For an example of this trend in Europe and in Germany, see Karasszon D., A Concise History of Veterinary History (Budapest: 1988) and Herzer H., Zur Geschichte des bremischen Veterinärwesens: 1650 bis 1975 (Bremen: 1981).
expertise of equine-focused guild-masters reveals that there was neither a consistent nor unified grouping of trade knowledge, abilities or skills that defined a large-smith, farrier or veterinary practitioner in early modern Germany. Instead, these smith guild-masters and court-based authors constructed diverging, yet coterminous, trade identities through anthropomorphising their equine veterinary skill-sets to justify self-beneficial socio-economic and gender hierarchies.

Despite the economic and social disparities among stable-masters, horse-doctors and farriers at court, these men ultimately shared many of the same prescriptive ideals about proper equine husbandry, trade practices and skill-sets and veterinary hierarchies. In contrast to those who practised veterinary healthcare in guilds, court-based authors envisioned the trade skills of farriers as entirely focused on hippological specialities and regarded master tradesmen as easily grouped into distinct social ranks. Just as early modern medical practice distinguished between the role and rank of surgeons compared with those of physicians, farriery and equine medicine were recognised as analogous yet separate trades. Prescriptive court works represented the rank and value of equine veterinary trades as something that should naturally follow the model set by human medical trades. In this way, human hierarchies and behaviours were used to justify the social and economic hierarchies that were being constructed in veterinary medicine.

Despite the rising social prominence of large-smiths and farriers in towns and in the countryside, smith guild-masters were not included in the prescriptive trade identities depicted by court-centred authors. As the means whereby equine-focused smiths, operating between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, could hope to achieve this social success, they began a strategic restructuring of guild culture around the still-evolving equine-based skill-sets in which they had trained. As opposed to advertising trade abilities in bovine healthcare or gaining a wider range of veterinary knowledge to work as a general practitioner, many German large-smiths and farriers chose to focus specifically on equine medicine. Although oxen and cows vastly outnumbered horses in early modern society, the skill-sets most often added by smith guild members were equine-centred farriery and medicine. By placing new, masculine values on the cultural status accorded to

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3 Smiths of precious metals were of a much higher social rank than iron-smiths and held separate guilds.