

RIMANTAS BALSYS

Rooster and Hen in Folk Medicine

Summary

The aim of the article is to analyse remaining data of folk medicine in which the vital powers of poultry – rooster and hen – are used in one way or another to ensure, maintain and preserve health; to determine why exactly these birds are also the cause of many diseases and are used in various forms to treat the mentioned diseases.

The names of diseases with roots *višt-* and *gaid-* could have been due to several reasons: a) physical characteristics of these birds; b) colour features (especially red); c) reflections of the old religion; d) the influence of Christianity.

The analysed examples of 16–20 th cc. folk medicine, in which the vital powers of the rooster (hen) are used in one form or another, show that folk medicine in the 16–17 th cc. was still closely related to the religion of the pre-Christian period, when these domestic birds were abundantly sacrificed to the old gods, believing that it is they – the gods – provide and ensure people's health; eliminate, postpone diseases. The same trend can be observed in later (18–20 th) centuries. Belief that roosters, hens (individual parts of their organs) have special healing powers has remained in folk medicine.

Keywords: folk medicine, rooster, hen, paganism.