

Summary

Name anarchy in Sweden's cowsheds around 1900

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The turn of the 20th century saw a number of changes in cattle breeding in Sweden, due in part to increased imports of animals. As a result, new names were introduced, ultimately leading to a shift away from the earlier naming system, which had been based largely on the animals' appearance. For a time, a kind of anarchy can be said to have prevailed in the naming of cattle. In this essay, I discuss a number of names and naming principles that were used during a transitional period. The names are drawn from the first herd book of Swedish Lowland (SLB) cattle. In their eagerness to create new cow names, the namers made use, for example, of feminine forms of men's names, variations on common women's names, suffixal formations, puns, and even women's names borrowed outright. Examples of these types are discussed and explanations offered as to why this free approach to name-giving was impractical.