

## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

### From “Hog Bean” to “Fowl Murder”: Liebig’s Henbane Advertising Card



Black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) was featured (*low right*) in this Italian-language version of the Poisonous Plant series of trade cards advertising Liebig's Extract of Meat. Henbane's flower (*high left*) and fruit (*high right*) are also depicted on this card as distributed by the company linked to chloroform pioneer Justus von Liebig. Because hogs could eat henbane with apparent impunity, Greek *hyos kyamos* ("hog bean") passed to Latin as *hyoscyamus* and evolved over centuries into the Italian *giusquiamo*, which is printed twice on this card. Originally, the plant was *henbell* ("death bell") in Old English, *bell* was replaced with *bane* yielding *henbane* ("death murder"). Later authorities tried to back-interpret *henbane* as "fowl murder." What remains clear is how dangerous herbal preparations or oils of henbane can be, easily overdosing victims with deadly slurries of scopolamine, atropine, and hyoscyamine. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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