

Herbs for Animals

The High Points

1. Herbs can be used in cooking for your pets, or as medications
2. As medications, they can be helpful for a variety of chronic problems
3. As medications, they can have side effects and interact with other medications
4. For help using herbs, contact a veterinary herbalist

Introduction

Herbal medicine is probably the oldest medicine for people, and by extension, for animals. Unfortunately, the written tradition detailing historical uses of herbs in domestic animals is scant, at best. Veterinary herbalists study the human literature for clues, while using their knowledge of unique animal physiology and biochemistry to develop treatment recommendations. Herbal medicine can provide benefits that conventional medicine doesn't yet offer.

Nutritional and Culinary herbs to use in pet animals

Many veterinarians believe that full, complete nutrition is not available from a bag or a can, in much the same way that humans need fresh fruits and vegetables for the unidentified phytonutrients which are thought to prevent cancer. Cooking stews containing good quality meats (chicken, pork, fish, organ meats, lamb, etc), whole grains (rice, barley, oats, etc) and a variety of fresh or frozen vegetables will give your pet an extra boost, plus give you a creative outlet for using the culinary herbs listed below.

<u>Ginger</u>	(for nausea, motion sickness)
<u>Garlic</u>	(with care - antimicrobial, adjunctive treatment for cancer)
<u>Turmeric</u>	(anti-oxidant, hepatoprotective, anti-cancer)
<u>Parsley</u>	(diuretic)
<u>Cranberry</u>	(for recurring urinary tract infections)
<u>Shitake mushroom</u>	(immune stimulant)
<u>Artichokes</u>	(liver disease)

Common conditions where herbs may help

Motion sickness	Ginger
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Hot spots	black or green tea compresses
Allergies (general)	burdock, tang kuei, local honey
Urinary tract infections	Cranberry
Wounds	aloe, comfrey, chamomile - all topically only; Yunnan baiyao
Upper respiratory infections	echinacea, oregon grape root
Immune suppression	astragalus, reishi, shitake
Arthritis	boswellia, devil's claw
Liver disease	milk thistle, artichokes, turmeric
Conjunctivitis	eyebright, tea compresses (topically)
Diabetes	gymnema, bitter melon

Common herbs that are potentially dangerous for use in animals

Pennyroyal	very toxic to dogs and cats
White Willow bark	salicylates may be toxic to cats
Garlic	Heinz body anemia
Tea Tree oil	VERY toxic to cats and small dogs
Ma Huang	cats have idiosyncratic reactions
Comfrey	cause liver damage
Hops	in greyhounds

Contraindications for herb use

Pets with these conditions may have serious short- or long-term reactions to the indicated herbs, unless properly prescribed by your veterinarian. These are precisely the herbs that are used in treatment of some of these conditions - this is why it is important for a veterinarian to make the decision about whether the herb is appropriate for your pet.

Kidney disease:	caution with dandelion, parsley
Heart disease:	caution with motherwort, hawthorn, goldenseal, oregon grape, barberry
Autoimmune disease:	caution with echinacea, reishi, maitake, astragalus

- Liver disease:** caution with dandelion
- Thyroid disease:** caution with kelp, bugleweed

Certain herbs should not be used if your pet is on the following medications, unless prescribed by your veterinarian:

- Steroids:** Prednisone, Medrol, Dexamethasone
 - Cardiac drugs:** Digoxin, Enalapril, Norvasc, Lotensin, atenolol etc
 - Diuretics:** Furosemide, spironolactone, Diazide
 - Central Nervous system drugs:** Elavil, Buspirone, clomipramine, phenobarbital
 - Hormones:** diethylstilbestrol, thyroxine
 - Antibiotics:** sulfa drugs
 - Diabetic/hypoglycemic drugs:** Insulin, glipizide, acarbose
 - Aspirin**
 - Chemotherapy agents**
 - Anti-inflammatories:** Etogesic, Rimadyl, phenylbutazone
 - Bronchodilators:** Theodur/theophylline
- And probably many more!

Herbs that may have interactions with certain drugs:

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| Aloe | garlic | horsetail |
| cascara | ginger | kava |
| senna | ginseng | khella |
| black cohosh | lavender | licorice |
| buchu | ginkgo | mistletoe |
| bugleweed | goldenseal | pau d'arco |
| cats claw | gotu cola | red clover |
| dandelion | green tea | St John's wort |
| dang qui | hops | valerian |
- and many chinese herbal combinations

Summary

Although this is a paper on herbal treatment of animals, it is unwise to assume that herbs alone are used to treat ill-health in our pets. Most holistic veterinarians recommend nutritional support, in addition to conventional therapy if the problem is acute, severe or life threatening. This integrated approach is designed to give the animal patient the greatest amount of comfort combined with the gentlest and most supportive

treatments. For more information using herbs for your pets, [find the veterinary herbalist nearest you](#) through the Veterinary Botanical Medicine Association.