



HOMEOPATHY

Fact Sheet 44

Introduction

Homeopathy dates back to Greek times but its potential was not realised until the late eighteenth century and the pioneering work of the German physician Samuel Hahnemann. Medical treatments of the day seemed to rely on a large amount of good fortune and it appeared that the more pungent and unpleasant a medicine, the more effective it was likely to be. Most cures probably occurred as a result of the patient's own ability to recover regardless of the treatment given.

It was not surprising that Hahnemann became disillusioned with medicine and decided to devote his scholarly energies into translating medical texts into German. In translating Cullen's *Materia Medica* (a medical book listing treatments of the day) he found himself in disagreement with the proposed action of Cinchona bark (one of the few effective medicines of the time) in treating malaria. Over the course of several days he took repeated doses of Cinchona and surprisingly developed a set of symptoms closely resembling those of malaria. Once he stopped taking the medicine the symptoms disappeared and he returned to good health. His conclusion from this experiment was that "like could cure like" (in Latin, *similia similibus curentur*) on which the whole basis of homeopathy is founded.

Testing the theory

As a scientist he set about testing his hypothesis. Over a period of about twenty years he tested a great number of other substances on himself and friends. In each case he carefully noted down the symptoms, both physical and mental, which developed as a result of taking each individual remedy. These he compiled into his own "*Materia Medica*". By listing what a substance could cause, he was able to predict what symptoms it was capable of curing. In the winter of 1812/1813 he was able to put his theories into practice by successfully treating a typhoid outbreak.

Hahnemann was aware that some of the remedies he tested were toxic so he set about finding the minimum dose needed for a cure. He began diluting his remedies finding that as he did so, the more effective they became as medicines. This is, of course in direct contrast to modern drugs which become less effective when diluted. His discovery that infinitely diluted substances could be used to heal, meant that some of the most poisonous substances known could be put to use therapeutically without worrying about their toxic nature.

The Dilution Factor

Almost any substance can be prepared homeopathically even metals, minerals, snake venoms and diseased tissues. This involves serial dilutions with vigorous shaking in between each individual stage, a process known as succussion, which

is vital to the correct preparation of a remedy. The dilutions are commonly carried out in stages of 1 in 10, giving decimal dilutions (termed potencies), denoted by the suffix x, or 1 in 100 giving centesimal potencies, denoted by the suffix c, where the c is often omitted. Sometimes you will see other potencies mentioned such as the M range where 1M = 1000c.

As an example Arnica 30 (or 30c), a remedy frequently used for injury and shock, would be prepared initially from an alcoholic extract of the plant known as the mother tincture. One drop of this would be added to 99 drops of an alcohol/water mixture and the test tube shaken vigorously or succussed. The contents of this tube contain the first centesimal potency or 1c dilution. One drop of this would then be added to 99 drops of alcohol/water mixture and once again this would be shaken giving the 2c potency. This process would be repeated a further 28 times until the 30c potency was achieved. A few drops of the required potency could then be added to lactose tablets or powders which then become potentised with the active remedy.

Looking at the process scientifically, the dilution at the 6c potency is equivalent to 1:1,000,000,000,000 (or 10^{12}), more or less equivalent to one drop of mother tincture in the combined volume of about 50 swimming pools. One of the main problems is that at these dilutions it is difficult to see how the remedies can act, especially since past the 12c potency there will not be any of the molecules of the original substance left. These points form the main basis on which the critics of homeopathy claim that it is unscientific and that it does not work and that any result is largely due to natural cure or placebo effect.

Yet homeopathy is effective in treating a wide variety of problems in animals where the placebo effect can be discounted and the number of successes lies outside the realms of chance. No one knows for sure how homeopathic remedies work, but they may act by stimulating the bodies own healing powers in some way. One popular theory is that each individual potentised remedy contains a form of energy derived from the original substance through the process of dilution and succussion. It is this energy which heals, correcting imbalances in the body which manifest themselves as ill health.

Matching the Symptoms

Correctly applied homeopathy can be a remarkable and effective system of medicine which has the benefit of being safe and without side-effects. The remedies can be used to treat any animal of any age without fear of doing any harm. However, the key to successful use of homeopathy lies in matching the patient's symptoms to the remedy fairly accurately. The more close the match, the more likely the chance of a response. If by chance the wrong remedy is given then nothing happens, but neither is any harm done.

Care & Storage

Remedies are available in various forms usually tablets or liquids. As "energised" medicines they need special care, handling and storage. They are easily deactivated by strong smells and vapours such as camphor and eucalyptus. It is best to store them well away from any aromatherapy products. Bright light, heat and electromagnetic radiation (e.g. from televisions, mobile phones and computers) can also deactivate or depotentise them, rendering them useless. Stored properly though, the remedies will keep for many years (particularly if stored in glass) without losing their efficacy.

Many people use tablets as they are the most readily available. However liquid remedies work equally as well and are easier to dispense where animals are concerned. This also dispenses with the fact that the tablets cannot be handled as this can depotentise (deactivate) them. The remedy drops can be tipped straight into the animal's mouth, onto a paw to be licked off, added to food or even added to drinking water.

Remedies are available in various strengths or potencies. The 6c and 30c are the most common potencies in regular use. Low potencies such as 6c have relatively little healing energy and frequent doses are needed to produce a result. One advantage of using these is that the match between remedy and patient's symptoms does not have to be quite so exact. Slightly higher potencies, such as 30c have more inherent healing power, need fewer doses to produce an effect and heal at a deeper level, at the expense of having to be more accurately matched to the patient. Even higher potencies such as 200c or 1M have a profound healing action and often need only a few doses to produce remarkable results, but the match with the symptoms has to be more spot on or the remedy simply will not work.

Dosing your Pet

Denes have produced a range of popular remedies that can help with a wide range of everyday problems. The dose is irrespective of the age or size of the animal.

- For Acute problems give 5 drops every 2-3 hours until the symptoms resolve
- For Chronic illness give 5 drops 2 or 3 times daily

DENES RANGE of HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES

SUGGESTED REMEDIES & THEIR USES

1. ACONITE

MONKSHOOD

This is one of the main remedies for FEVER but has to be used early on to be effective. It acts best where the symptoms appear suddenly, perhaps after being chilled in the rain or cold wind. The animal seems to lose all strength and sometimes wants to be alone. Thirst is often a feature. The other main use for Aconite is in treating ANXIETY, RESTLESSNESS and FEAR. It is a useful remedy to use for dogs or cats frightened in the show ring and for those sensitive to noise. It can often be used to calm cats and dogs that are BAD TRAVELLERS. Its only drawback is that its action is short lasting so that it needs to be given every 2 or 3 hours.

2. ARNICA

LEOPARD'S BANE

This is the one remedy that no pet owner should be without. It's keynote is INJURY - accidental or otherwise. It helps prevent BRUISING, limits bleeding, encourages HEALING and reduces pain and the effects of shock. It can be used in any situation from minor sprains and strains to helping with serious traumatic injuries such as a road accident. It is a good idea to give Arnica a day or two before any planned SURGERY (such as spaying or castration) or dental work and for a day or so afterwards. By doing so you can help reduce the risk of haemorrhage and associated complications and ensure that wounds heal quickly with the minimum of bruising or infection. You can use Arnica for dogs that have

been over exercised or are just exhausted. It can assist in recovery from STROKES and help revive newborn puppies or kittens.

3. ARSENICUM ALBUM WHITE ARSENIC

Arsenicum has been famed as a classic poison throughout history. Since good poisons make excellent remedies Arsenic has a multitude of uses. One of its main indications is in treating GASTRO-ENTERITIS, particularly from eating spoilt food or rubbish. NAUSEA, VOMITING and retching are prominent and food is refused. There is thirst for small quantities of water, which may be vomited back immediately. The Vomit can contain blood, bile, food or mucus. There is often simultaneous diarrhoea which is offensive and may also contain blood. The animal is very cold and hugs the fire. Symptoms are often worse around midnight. Arsenicum is also a major SKIN remedy where there is ITCHING, REDNESS AND FLAKING (DANDRUFF) which is often allergic based. It is also a remedy for ANXIETY or RESTLESSNESS especially where this is a problem at night leading to pacing around.

4. BRYONIA WHITE BRYONY

This remedy acts chiefly on joints and on the chest. It is used for treating ARTHRITIS where the symptoms are better for rest and in cool weather and worse in hot weather and for using the leg. Affected joints are sometimes hot or visibly swollen. Bryonia is also used to help with DRY COUGHS where bouts of coughing are induced by the animal moving around. Other uses for Bryonia include CONSTIPATION and IRRITABILITY.

5. CANTHARIS SPANISH FLY

Cantharis is a well known remedy for CYSTITIS where prompt use can bring immediate relief of the main symptoms which include straining to pass urine, frequent urination and sometimes blood in the urine. This is also the remedy for red, raw skin as is sometimes seen in some forms of eczema and dermatitis. Cantharis can also help with healing scalds and burns.

6. EUPHRASIA EYEBRIGHT

As its name suggests, this remedy can help with eye problems predominantly. It is commonly used to help with cases of CONJUNCTIVITIS where the eyes have a sticky yellowish discharge and where they appear sore.

7. FRAGARIA WILD STRAWBERRY

Fragaria has a reputation of helping dissolve dental PLAQUE from teeth and in preventing the build up of plaque after the teeth have been cleaned.

8. HEPAR SULPH CALCIUM SULPHIDE

This remedy is often used for treating infections such as PAINFUL ABSCESSSES or infected WOUNDS where there is a discharge of pus and the are is sensitive to the least touch. SKIN INFECTIONS and EYE INFECTIONS where there is a mucky, foul discharge often respond well.

9. NUX VOMICA POISON NUT

CONSTIPATION is the main indication for this remedy. It works well where the dog or cat strains but either little or nothing is passed. In fact, if straining is

absent then Nux vomica is not the correct remedy. It is also a remedy for the LIVER and for helping restore the DIGESTION after an upset. In this context it is useful after surgery where it helps detoxify the liver and stimulates the appetite. It can also be used for VOMITING caused by overeating, change in diet or rich food. Nux vomica is also useful for strengthening WEAK BACK LEGS where there is a tendency to drag the feet and for low grade LOWER BACK PAIN.

10.PHOSPHORUS

THE ELEMENT

This remedy has a great many uses actions. Amongst these it has two important indications. Firstly VOMITING. It is useful where there is thirst for large quantities of water but as soon as the fluid becomes warmed in the stomach it is vomited back. If food is brought back, this happens soon after eating and is returned in large amounts and is mostly undigested. The other main use for phosphorus is in helping to arrest BLEEDING or haemorrhage from any cause including tooth extractions, wounds or tumours. Animals that respond well to this remedy tend to be bouncy and bright, craving affection and company. Phosphorus is also one of the remedies useful in dealing with FEAR of THUNDER and other sudden noises (such as FIREWORKS) and in treating DRY COUGHS. It also acts on the nerves and can help where there is nerve weakness affecting the back legs.

11.PULSATILLA

WIND FLOWER

FALSE PREGNANCY in bitches is one of the principle indications for Pulsatilla where symptoms include nesting, milk production, variable appetite, seeking attention or company and submissive behaviour. Pulsatilla is also used for CATARRH, RHINITIS and SINUSITIS where there is a creamy yellow colour discharge and for DIGESTIVE UPSETS caused by rich, fatty foods.

12.RHUS TOX

POISON IVY

This plant grows in the States and is renowned for its effects on the skin. Contact causes intense itching with redness and blistering. This effect might suggest that its main use is in treating skin problems, however it is better known as a remedy for ARTHRITIS, STIFF JOINTS and RHEUMATISM. It is one of the most frequently prescribed remedies but it only works where the symptoms of the patient match those associated with the remedy. For this reason it is not "the remedy for arthritis" as many people believe. Rhus tox works where stiffness is evident and is worse in damp, cold weather and for rest. Symptoms ease with warmth and gentle exercise but prolonged activity makes things worse. Sometimes the pains associated with rheumatism can make the animal restless, moving from place to place to get relief or to get comfortable. Rhus is also the main remedy for STRAINS and SPRAINS, especially to muscles, where the symptoms match. Rhus tox is also used to treat SKIN PROBLEMS, especially those that are ALLERGY related and where there is inflammation of the skin around the eyes.

13.RUTA GRAV

RUE

Ruta is a lot like Rhus tox and is used mainly for treating STRAINS. It acts on tendons especially where they attach to bone. It also acts on the periosteal (outer) layer of bone and is important in treating INJURIES to BONE including fractures and injury. It is another remedy to be considered in cases of arthritis especially where symptoms are worse for rest and in damp weather. Animals that respond often have great difficulty getting to their feet after lying down and sometimes their legs will just give out as they are walking along.

14.SILICA**FLINT**

This remedy is well known for helping EXPEL FOREIGN MATERIAL from the body such as thorns or grass awns. It can be used to help resolve ABSCESSSES which have burst and to heal discharging sinuses or fistulae. CHRONIC CATARRH and SINUSITIS and respond as well. Silica will also slow the development of CATARACTS and will aid the healing of EYE ULCERS.

15.SULPHUR**THE ELEMENT**

Sulphur is best known homeopathically in the context of treating SKIN PROBLEMS. It can help with cases of FOX MANGE and with FLEA ALLERGY DERMATITIS and with many other skin conditions especially where there is an allergic basis. Sulphur is also used to help in general with ITCHING, SCRATCHING, nibbling and rubbing as well as DANDRUFF, SCABS, SORES and SMELLY GREASY SKIN.

16.SYMPHYTUM**COMFREY**

The common name of comfrey is knitbone and as the countryside name suggests, Comfrey is useful in speeding up and in ensuring that FRACTURES heal well. It is also extremely useful in helping with JOINT, CARTILAGE, LIGAMENT and TENDON injuries in general where it can be used alongside other remedies. General injuries to the EYE can also benefit where it can assist in healing ULCERS.

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- Writing to us at:
Denes Natural Pet Care Ltd
2 Osmond Road
Hove, East Sussex BN3 1TE