

Apitherapy finds a role in caring for animals

A growing number of veterinarians in the United States are adopting holistic veterinary medicine, in which they consider all aspects of an animal's environment and employ gentle, minimally invasive techniques. Holistic veterinary medicine (also referred to as alternative or complementary veterinary medicine) encompasses such practices as herbal medicine, acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, therapeutic nutrition, and even certain components of apitherapy.

One veterinarian who enthusiastically opts for a product of the hive honey is Richard Palmquist, DVM, who for more than 20 years has practiced integrative medicine, which makes use of both mainstream and complementary and alternative therapies. He is past president of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association and current president of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Foundation, which promotes research to determine the effectiveness of various complementary and alternative veterinary therapies.

Honey's anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties make it ideal for handling wound infections. In his practice at Centinela Animal Hospital in Inglewood, California, Dr. Palmquist treated a dog with a damaged paw by applying a "medical honey wrap" directly on the wound. He notes that honey can remain in an animal's fur, but removing it is easy: warm water or a saline solution will do the job. It is important, he says, for animal owners to notify their veterinarian if they decide to give honey to a pet. He also used honey to help a dog with chronic severe skin and ear infections. He advised against surgery and instead recommended feeding the dog a teaspoon of local honey daily. A few weeks after the owner depleted his supply of that honey, the symptoms returned, so it was evident that the dog would need to take honey indefinitely. Once this treatment resumed, Dr. Palmquist recalls, the dog's "skin and ears were perfect."

Honey may be helpful in addressing allergic components in cases like the one above by treating pollen allergies and balancing immune regulation. When certain animals eat honey, says Dr. Palmquist, it decreases inflammation in the intestinal tract and may affect dendritic cells (specialized cells that monitor the proteins going into the body through the gut) to inform the body that pollen is being ingested and not to overreact. When pollen enters the nose or lungs or skin, the signals from those cells reduce the allergy symptoms.

For dogs with allergies, Dr. Palmquist commonly provides a kale shake, consisting of a third to a half leaf of organic kale blended with water or broth, plus

honey, given daily. His advice to dog owners: identify the trees or flowers that are in bloom when the allergies flare, and then look for honey that contains these pollens.

The American Holistic Veterinary Medical Foundation is raising money for research into holistic therapies for animals. ecause many issues cross species, supporting the foundation helps both people and animals. Website:
www.ahvmf.org

Written by Richard Palmquist, DVM