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Giving nutritious herbs for vitamins.

*Food should be your medicine and medicine should be our food –
Hippocrates.*

Why herbs are the better option.

In addition to providing vitamins and other nutrients, herbs (whether fresh or dried) offer so much other benefits to your dog:

Herbs can contain carbohydrates, fats and proteins along with the vitamins and minerals and trace minerals necessary for good nutrition and medicine.

They can boost the immune system.

They can cleanse and alkalize (detoxify) the body.

Whole plants nourish the body on a deep level, reaching the brain, bones, muscles, skin, coat, heart, lungs, liver and kidneys.

Herbs have many medicinal benefits.

Which nutritional herbs to use.

Any of these herbs can be used daily, but you can also rotate them into your dog's food.

Just change what you're giving daily every 2nd or 3rd day or even weekly.

Alfalfa.

Alfalfa is known as the king of herbs and has been grown for thousands of years.

Vitamins, including vitamins A, C, D, E and K as well as B

Minerals - copper, niacin, calcium, magnesium, iron and potassium and is rich in trace minerals.

Alfalfa is rich in protein (20%)

has anti-inflammatory properties

help improve arthritis

contains chlorophyll which has cleansing and other qualities

blood purifier

serve as a tonic

a digestive aid a - contains the digestive enzyme "betaine"

Caution.

Choose / purchase - a certified organic product to avoid buying a genetically modified source.

Grow it yourself - use it before it flowers and don't use the seeds (it contain L-cavanine that can cause blood disorders).

Dosage.

Add a pinch of dried herb per 5 kg of bodyweight to the feed pan daily.

If you use store-bought capsules, assume the dose is for a 70 kg human and adjust for your dog's weight.

Dandelion.

You may think of dandelions as an annoying weed, but they're one of the most nutritious green leafy vegetables you can find.

Dandelion is nature's richest source of beta-carotene and the third richest source of vitamin A of all foods, after cod-liver oil and beef liver. Dandelion is rich in vitamins A, C, K, D and the B complex vitamins. It contains potassium, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus and many other trace minerals. It's high in fiber and is a good source of protein. The roots and the leaves both have medicinal properties. The leaves work as a digestive and liver tonic. The root is a cleansing tonic for the liver, gallstones, jaundice and constipation. Dandelion leaves help flush and tone the kidneys. Dandelion is a powerful diuretic, but it replaces the potassium that's lost in the process, instead of depleting it as pharmaceutical diuretics do. You can easily collect dandelions from your lawn and you can use the whole plant – flowers, roots, leaves and stems.

Caution.

Make sure your dandelions haven't been sprayed with herbicides or pesticides.

Since dandelion is a diuretic, make sure your dog has ample opportunity to get outside during the day.

Dosage.

Chop and dry your dandelions (or buy dried herbs) and sprinkle 1 tsp per 10 kg of body weight directly onto your dog's food.

You can also make dandelion tea just as you make ordinary tea.

Give your dog 1/3 cup per 10 kg of body weight, up to 3 times a day.

Nettle.

Nettle (or stinging nettle) is an especially rich source of vitamin A.

It also contains potassium, iron, calcium, and magnesium and supplies phytonutrients such as chlorophyll, sterols, polyphenols, lignans, and gallic acid.

Nettle also acts as a catalyst to help the body absorb many vitamins, minerals and trace minerals as well as several other herbs.

It also has many medicinal qualities, acting as a diuretic and tonic and aiding digestion.

It can treat stiff joints and helps purify the blood and cleanse the liver and kidneys.

Nettle can also be used to fight seasonal allergies by treating imbalances of the mucous membranes.

You can also apply nettle to stop bleeding in open wounds

You can buy nettle dried or pick it yourself from any source that you're sure hasn't been sprayed with pesticides or herbicides.

Caution.

Be sure to use gardening gloves to harvest nettle, as "stinging nettle" is well named and will cause an itchy painful rash when it touches bare skin.

Cooking removes the stinging quality.

Some pets with plant allergies may be sensitive to nettle.

Dosage.

Sprinkle dried herb onto food, ½ tsp per day in food.

Or, for finicky dogs, cover fresh young plants with water, cook until tender, then serve with butter and share with your dog!

Burdock Root.

Burdock root is a common weed that's an excellent addition to improve your dog's overall diet.

Burdock root is high in carbohydrates and inulin.

It's also very high in iron, magnesium, silicon, thiamine, sodium, potassium, phosphorus and chromium.

Burdock is a cleansing herb with a balanced mineral content and acts as a good long term liver tonic, helping to cleanse the blood.

It stimulates digestive juices and bile secretion, which aids digestion and appetite, and absorbs toxins from the bowel.

Burdock is useful in treating skin conditions and can help remove systemic imbalance that may be causing skin issues.

Burdock grows in almost any uncultivated space and it's also easy to grow yourself.

It's a delicious mild sweet tasting food that you can cook like potatoes or carrots in a stew.

Dogs love the taste!

Dosage.

Stew burdock as described above and add to your dog's food.

Because its food, the amount isn't important ...

but start out slowly to make sure your dog doesn't have any digestive issues with a new ingredient.

Alternatively, you can make a tonic using 1 cup of cold water with 2 Tbsp fresh burdock root or 1 to 2 tsp of dried root.

Bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Cool and strain.

Refrigerate for up to a week.

Add to food, giving ½ per 5 kg of body weight daily.

You can also buy powdered burdock.

Assume the package directions are for a 75 kg human and adjust for your dog's weight.

Kelp.

Kelp is a highly nutritious sea plant. It provides over 70 natural vitamins and minerals, including essential trace minerals.

The rich mixture of iodine and other minerals work to keep your dog's entire glandular system in healthy working order, especially the thyroid, adrenal and pituitary glands.

It contains vitamins A, B1, B2, C, D, E and K, plus amino acids and iron, sodium, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium and potassium.

Kelp can help maintain and cleanse the digestive system and its high iron content fortifies the blood, helping the heart to pump more efficiently.

It can help relieve dry, itchy skin and long term kelp supplementation can improve your dog's skin and coat health.

Kelp nourishes the sensory nerves, brain membranes, spinal cord and brain tissue.

It also contains alginic acid, which can help protect the body against the effects of radiation.

Caution.

Because kelp comes from the sea and has the potential for contamination, look a brand that tests for heavy metals and other toxins, especially arsenic.

Don't give more than the recommended dose because too much iodine can over-stimulate the thyroid and cause other health issues.

If your dog's on thyroid medication, consult your veterinarian before feeding kelp.

Dosage.

Give your dog ¼ tsp per 5 kg of body weight daily.

Herbs and skin issues.

Looking at the skin.

The skin is made up of three layers:

the epidermis

the dermis and hydrodermis.

Epidermis.

The epidermis has five layers and contains four different kinds of cells: keratinocytes, melanocytes, merkel and langerhans.

Keratinocytes produce keratin responsible for waterproofing your dog's coat.

Melanocytes dictate your dog's skin and hair color while protecting against the sun's UV rays.

Merkel cells provide sensory perception.

For example, merkel cells are found in the paw pads of dogs.

Langerhans cells play a fundamental role in your dog's immune health by keeping the skin's micro biome balanced.

Dermis.

The second layer of the skin is called the dermis.

Attached by basil cells and a layer of protein called collagen, the dermis provides a strong foundation for hair growth and connective tissue.

Unlike the non-vascular epidermis, the dermis has an intricate network of nerves, blood vessels, lymph glands and nervous system receptors that regulate pain and other sensations.

Hypodermis.

The last layer of skin is the hypodermis. It anchors the skin to the underlying systems of the body while providing flexibility, shock absorption and insulation.

The failure of the standard of care.

The standard of care in Western veterinary medicine is a set of circumstances for which a defined standard treatment is administered. The standard of care for most skin issues, acute or chronic, involves the administering of antibiotics, anti-fungal, immune-suppressants and corticosteroids.

The above system doesn't treat your dog as an individual or question the cause of the condition.

The standard of care is the same for my APBT as it is for your Pug despite differences in diet, environment, vaccination, stress level or toxic load.

Allopathic medicine's ... regimen of eradication and suppression depletes the immune system and produces heat, congestion and inflammation throughout the body.

What makes matters worse is;

Repeated use of vaccines.

Antibiotics.

Steroids that can cause systemic imbalances leading to;

Food sensitivities.

Impaired liver.

Pancreatic function.

Various skin allergies.

Arthritis.

Inflammatory bowel disease.

Leaky gut syndrome.

Autoimmune disease.

Cancer.

An early warning system.

The release of toxins through the skin is the body's way of trying to rid itself of disease.

When we pay attention, the skin can serve as an early warning system alerting you to chronic disease and imbalances inside your dog's body.

In the early 1800s, American herbalist Samuel Thomson taught that disease "radiates from the center to the skin."

Homeopaths know this theory as Hering's Law of Cure from Constantine Hering, who's known as the father of American homeopathy.

Basically, when you look at how logical the body is and how it functions with its own set of checks and balances ...it makes sense that the body would protect itself by sending toxins to the periphery.

As healers, we can minimize these symptoms with herbal palliative care but by no means should we suppress them unless it's a matter of life or death.

Suppression of symptoms confuses the immune system, pushing the imbalance deeper into vital organs like the liver, kidneys, pancreas, nervous and digestive systems.

Treating skin conditions.

Chronic skin issues require consistency and time for true healing.

The cause of the disease or imbalance must be treated and then the body will correct itself which can take up to a year or more.

Diet, flower essences, exercise, fresh air, chiropractic care and massage provide effective additions for any skin-balancing program.

Daily massage increases circulation which brings nutrients to the skin, disperses oils through the dermis and helps move lymph fluids and excrete toxins.

Supplementation can play a key role in balancing out the body and supporting the liver.

Make sure your dog is receiving a fresh food diet with the proper ratio of vitamins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes, probiotics and essential fatty acids.

Chronic skin issues can be frustrating for both you and your dog.

Herbal and homeopathic medicine can help by acting as a catalyst to help the body adjust and heal itself.

Herbs for skin conditions.

Herbs can be used internally and externally to quell symptoms and bring about systemic balance.

General preparation and dosing directions.

Tincture.

Give 1 drop for every 12 kg, two to three times per day.

Infusion.

Make a hot tea using 25 g of herb in a 1 l of filtered water.

Boil water, add to herbs, cover and steep for 30 minutes.

Allow to cool.

Give 1 Tbsp for every 10 kg for morning and evenings with food unless otherwise noted.

Decoction.

Add 1 25 g root, bark or seed to a l of filtered water.

Cover and simmer on low for 1 to 2 hours.

Give 1 Tbsp for every 10 kg divided for mornings and evenings with food.

Poultice or compress.

Chop up fresh plant material. For poultice, apply directly to affected area or wrap in clean gauze and apply.

For compress, apply herbal mixture/tincture/infusion/decoction to clean cotton cloth and cover affected area.

Can be applied hot and cold.

Garlic.

{See article under supplements}

Giving wholesome herbs to your dog is a wonderful way to get some vitamins and other nutrients into them and deliver some extra health benefits at the same time.

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*).

Parts used:

whole plant, leaf, dried root.

Method:

tincture, decoction, infusion and dried root.

External use:

Simmer leaves for 5 minutes and use as a poultice to bring down swellings.

Internal use:

supports the nervous system and is anti-inflammatory.

Burdock Root (*Articum lappa*).

Parts used:

seed and root.

Method:

tincture, decoction, dried root.

External use:

cooled decoction wash for hair loss and dry skin.

Internal use:

body cleanser, liver support, hormone balancer, anti-inflammatory and prebiotic. Burdock mixes well with dandelion and red clover to help clear toxins.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*).

Parts used:

Flowers.

Method:

infusion, tincture, oil, fresh or dried flower.

External use: massage oil or salve for deep dermal penetration to increase blood flow and circulation. Calendula compresses are excellent for anal swellings, improve lymphatic drainage, dry weeping skin.

Internal use:

anti-ulcer, anti-tumor, supports the liver and lymphatic system, anti-inflammatory, soothes the digestive system and gently stimulates the immune system.

Calendula is high in water content so it is best to dry them before use unless making a flower essence.

Avoid giving internally during hot weather as Calendula is warming.

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*).**Parts used:**

flowers, leaves, stems.

Method:

tincture, oil, infusion, fresh or dried.

External use:

simmer leaves to make a poultice for treating hot spots, ulcerated tissue, all types of sores, and dry skin.

I use this on the top of the tail where fleas like to bite.

Internal use: lymph stimulant, anti-tumor, digestive support, anti-inflammatory, prebiotic.

Excellent alternative to calendula in the summer as chickweed is cooling.

Cleavers (*Gallium aparine*).

Parts used:

leaves and above ground stems. Method: tincture, infusion.

External use:

Fresh juice wash for skin crusts and skin cancer. Can be used as a poultice when pulverized and full of juice for stopping bleeding and wounds. Cleavers quickly reduces inflammation.

Internally: supports lymphatic system, removes excess fluids, anti-tumor and makes an excellent systemic tonic for chronic imbalances.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*).

Parts used:

whole plant, flowers, leaves, root.

Methods:

oil, tincture, infusion, decoction, fresh, dried.

Externally:

use as an oil or salve for warts and other skin tags.

Internally:

liver restorative, kidney support, nutritive, anti-allergy, safe for long-term use.

My dogs love dandelion fresh and ground up in their raw diet in the spring.

Nettles (*Urtica dioica folia*).

Parts used:

leaf, root, seed.

Methods:

sautéed fresh, tincture, infusion, decoction, dried herb, fresh juice.

External:

Fresh juice as a wash for inflammation and to stop bleeding or weeping.

Internally:

nutritive, anti-inflammatory, kidney support. An excellent remedy for environmentally reactive dogs, safe for long-term use.

Yellow Dock (*Rumex crispus*).**Parts used:**

Leaves and root.

Methods:

infusion, decoction, tincture, dried herb, oil.

External use:

fresh cooled infusion can treat burns, itching, wounds and insect bites.

Internal use:

juice can be used for burns humectant, liver support, small intestine and kidney support.

Use as a single herb under the supervision of an herbalist or holistic vet. Not for long-term use.

The skin is an indicator of health.

When treating conditions of the skin including the ears, make sure your health practitioner uses a complete approach focused on causative factors.

If we honor the skin as an integral organ we can use it to help prevent disease before it has a chance to take hold in the body.

This outlook would move treatments of chronic skin conditions from a suppressive standard of care to a supportive format that involves diet, supplementation, herbal or homeopathic medicine and lots of patience.

And don't forget that healing the skin can start from within.
If chronic skin irritation and disease won't let up, it could be leaky gut.