

BASICS OF VETERINARY HOMEOPATHY



What is Homeopathy?

Homeopathic medicine is a holistic method using natural substances to stimulate the body's natural healing process. Homeopathy is based on the beliefs of the ancient Greeks and Romans but was officially founded in the late 18th century by German physician Samuel Hahneman.^{1 2}

The main principle is based on 'like cures like', or that a substance that is capable, in a toxic dose, of producing a set of symptoms is also capable, in much lower doses, of curing the same set of symptoms regardless of their perceived causes.^{1 2}

This then stimulates the body to heal itself by strengthening the immune system.⁴

The goal of Homeopathic Medicine is therefore 'cure' rather than 'alleviation' or 'suppression' of symptoms.⁴

Remedies are often derived from a number of plants, animal materials and minerals, and combination remedies can be a combination of these ingredients.^{1 2}

Veterinary homeopathy:

In the early days of homeopathy, the early practitioners treated both human as well as animal patients, and there are numerous case reports of these early treatments.²

Veterinary Homeopathy in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was common practice, and veterinarians in the nineteenth century, not only used information from their medical colleagues, but even had their own homeopathic texts - especially in the equine field.²

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, homeopathy in the western world, both in human and the veterinary field started to decline with the development of the 'allopathic' pharmaceutical industry.²

Since the middle of the twentieth century homeopathy has been undergoing a resurgence, starting in the human medical field. The resurgence in the use of homeopathy in the veterinary field has been growing as well, mainly in the last 20 to 30 years. This has not only been with the appearance of veterinarians who specifically practice naturopathic and homeopathic medicine, but also of the advent of homeopathic remedies that the 'normal' allopathically-trained veterinarian can use in their practice, and be used as part of the complete arsenal of remedies that can be used to enhance treatment protocols – in all species, but this has been seen especially with the growth of companion animal practice.^{2 3}

How does it work?

As noted above, homeopathy is based on 'like cures like', or that a substance that is capable, in toxic doses of producing a set of symptoms is also capable, in much lower doses, of curing the same set of symptoms regardless of their perceived causes.^{1 2}

The manufacture of homeopathic medicines is based on the 'law of minimum dose', which holds that the more diluted a homeopathic preparation is, the greater its effectiveness will be.

When homeopathic medicines are manufactured, they go through serial dilutions. A strength of a homeopathic medicine is indicated by the dilution ratio. (C for a 1:100 solution). A 5C preparation is therefore a 1:100 dilution done 5 times. Many preparations used are in the 15C to 24C category or even higher.^{1 5}

Importantly, each time a dilution is made, the medicine goes through a process called 'succussion', or violent shaking. At the time of the start of homeopathy this was thought to 'energize' or 'potentize' the dilution. If this step is not done properly the medicine loses its homeopathic medicinal properties with the dilutions.³

Based on a variety of reasons, there has often been skepticism with regards to efficacy of homeopathic preparations by allopathically trained professionals, not least of which was that there was no clear understanding of the mode of action – especially when the dilutions were taken into consideration.

What is clear, however, is that the use of Homeopathic preparations has now been scientifically proven in trials, both in the human and veterinary fields.³

It is also important to note that in the past few years, with the use of Transmission Electron Microscopy, Electron diffraction and chemical analysis by Inductively Coupled Plasma-atomic Emission Spectroscopy and other scientific analysis the presence of physical entities in these dilutions in the form of nanoparticles has been found.^{3 6 7 9 10}

These nanoparticles are crystalline in structure and contain silica due to the manufacturing/ potentization process. Silica is known to interact with the proteins and cells of the immune system.

This new information means that low dilutions act on organ receptors through ligand receptor interactions, and high dilutions on systemic-size dependent targets due to peculiar properties of nanoparticles able as a function of size to cross physiological barriers stimulate endocrine and immune systems or enter nerves to reach the brain directly.^{9 10}

Homeopathy therefore is a form of nanomedicine.^{9 10}

Homeopathy has therefore been proven to be a valid part of the medical and pharmacological field and the homeopathic medicines can, and should, form part of the total package available in the Animal Health field to treat and prevent diseases and conditions.^{1 5}

Combination vs single-active products:

Classical homeopaths and those specially trained in homeopathy often give one remedy at a time.

These can be used over a period of time and will be changed if the correct reaction is not noted.

This requires specialized training specifically in the correct diagnosis of the conditions as well as the correct use of these medicines as prescribing needs to be extremely accurate.^{1 5 8}

Therefore, for most animal health professionals, the use of combination medicines which have been specifically manufactured for sets of symptoms and conditions, is the safest and most effective way to use homeopathic preparations.^{1 5 8}

These preparations are made by using ingredients that are synergistic and are also manufactured under strict quality-control conditions.⁸

These ranges, such as the ECO-VET range are approved by a Regulatory Authority. This gives the user or prescriber peace of mind that the preparation complies with the relevant standards and has also been assessed by experts prior to being made available.

Can they be used with other treatments:

Although many 'pure' homeopaths will use only homeopathic preparations the products, especially the commercialized combination products can be used with other medications. If not synergistic with other medications, they are at least additive resulting in an improved treatment outcome. They should form part of the 'total package' in an animal health arsenal.

When do I use them:

In the traditional usage, homeopathic remedies were mainly used in chronic conditions. This usage is still valid, and many of the preparations are used very successfully to alleviate painful chronic conditions such as arthritis and anxiety.^{2 8}

In many of these cases they can also be used to reduce the usage of allopathic medications that may have long-term negative side-effects such as COX inhibitors, corticosteroids, or psychotropic medications.³

As part of a complete and holistic treatment protocol it has been seen that the use of homeopathic medications in acute conditions is extremely relevant as part of a complete treatment protocol.

The use of these preparations alongside the traditional allopathic medications results in an improved cure or survival rate, and it has also been seen that the cure is faster.³

What results can I expect:

It must be noted that no medicine is a 'golden bullet' and that they all need to be used in a total package of Veterinary care to get the best outcomes.

It has been shown that homeopathic remedies do start to work immediately, and that is why the outcomes when used in acute conditions, especially with other medications is so effective and the successes are seen acutely.

In chronic conditions (e.g. Arthritis, anxiety) the condition has normally been present for a while, and therefore the medication will sometimes take some time to get to full effect, especially when used on its own.

A period of at least 2 weeks should be given to see these effects.

What is also important is that, as with any treatment, the correct diagnosis needs to be made and a recommendation of Veterinary consultation and guidance in using any therapy program is important.⁸

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