

Introduction

This brief description of the background to homeopathy and the preparation and use of homeopathic remedies does not attempt to be comprehensive. It is intended simply to provide the reader with a basis for understanding and then using the advice in this book. There are a number of good books which explain in much fuller detail the history and philosophy of homeopathy and describe the preparation and administration of remedies, and a list of these can be found on pages 462-3.

What is homeopathy?

Homeopathy is a form of medical treatment using substances in very small amounts, after a special process of production. Many substances that are poisonous in their customary form - for example arsenic, or Belladonna (the deadly nightshade), or snake venom — can be made safe and used as highly effective medicines. Homeopathic remedies act to stimulate the body's own defence mechanisms to restore the patient, whether human or animal, to normal health, and they can also be of great value in chronic conditions which have not responded to the usual lines of treatment.

Homeopathy does not claim to take the place of conventional medicine. It should be regarded as a complementary form of treatment for use either on its own or in conjunction with any conventional treatment that your veterinary surgeon may prescribe. It is extremely versatile and can be used at different levels:

- 1) *First aid*. Remedies for shock, fractures, burns or wounds, for example.
- 2) *'Organ' or 'system' prescribing*. Certain remedies have an affinity with certain organs in the body, for example Chelidonium with the liver, Berberis with the kidneys, bladder and liver, Crataegus with the heart and circulation.
- 3) *Constitutional prescribing*. This is a holistic form of treatment and the remedy is prescribed on all aspects of the patient's personality and health, both mental and physical. It can be very effective but requires the involvement of a homeopathically qualified vet. This book therefore does not give instructions for its use by the individual owner, although there are

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various occasions throughout where reference is made to its likely benefit under suitable guidance.

The historical background

A system of 'Like cures like' has existed since early times, appearing in Hindu writings of over three thousand years ago. It was also mentioned in ancient Greece in the works of Hippocrates, by Galen in Rome in the 2nd century AD, and was practised by Paracelsus in Europe in the 16th century.

Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) was a German physician who was also a trained chemist, linguist and philosopher. It was while translating a herbal text by the Scottish physician William Cullen that the idea which led to homeopathy first came into his mind. Hahnemann disagreed with Cullen's description of the action of the medicine Quinine and made some experiments of his own. Quinine poisoning has symptoms very similar to those of malaria, known at the time as 'marsh fever' and prevalent in the area. He took doses of cinchona bark (the source of quinine) until he became ill with symptoms that resembled those of malaria (a process he defined as 'proving' the substance), and then cured himself by taking minute doses of the same substance. Encouraged by this success he and his colleagues began a lifelong series of provings, using higher and higher dilutions of the substances they were testing, and quite soon a body of evidence began to be put together. The information on the therapeutic action of these remedies and the many more that have been proved since Hahnemann's time is collectively known as the homeopathic materia medica.

It is important to note that although provings have always been performed exclusively on human volunteers, and never on animals, homeopathic remedies work just as effectively when administered to animals.

Hahnemann based his new system on three principles, known collectively as the Law of Similars.

The Law of Similars

- 1) All pharmacologically active substances produce in a healthy and susceptible individual a set of symptoms characteristic of the substance used.
- 2) All ill subjects, human and animal, produce a set of symptoms characteristic of a particular disease or condition. These can be defined as 'changes in the nature and actions' of the patient.

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- 3) Cure, as confirmed by the disappearance of the symptoms of the illness, can be effected by the administration of infinitesimally small doses of a substance, which experimentally will produce in the healthy individual the same symptoms as those of the sick patient.

How to use this book

You will see that the text is divided into two main sections. The first discusses those conditions which are general across the whole range of animals likely to be kept by an owner. The second section covers individual species and the conditions that can arise in one or several of them.

- 1) With the symptoms in mind, look up the section you need (e.g. 'Cough', page 66. Alternatively, check the General Index at the back of the book for the page number of the problem. Turn to the appropriate page and read the left-hand side for the background information.
- 2) Study the short descriptions on the right-hand page and select the one that most closely describes the symptoms of the animal (e.g. 'If there is fever, sweating, excitement and a full pulse often accompanied by dilated pupils').
- 3) Read off the name of the remedy suggested at the right of the chosen symptom description, together with the potency and the dosage scheme (e.g. 'Belladonna 30c. Dose four times daily for 5-7 days until improved').

The Primary Materia Medica at the end of the book (page 405) describes in some detail each of the remedies recommended for inclusion in the Medicine Chest (page 457). These are remedies which are likely to be of value very often and in various circumstances, and it will be practical to have them always to hand. The Secondary Materia Medica describes in lesser detail all the other remedies mentioned in the book. All of this information will be helpful as you develop your understanding and confidence in the use of the remedies.

Preparation of homeopathic medicines

Remedies can be made from almost anything. In practice, about 50-60% of them are derived from plant extracts and for this reason homeopathy is often - wrongly — confused with herbal medicine. The remainder are made from metals, minerals and other natural or chemical substances, as well as

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from noxious substances such as poisons, toxins and disease products.

The methods of preparation are described in detail in the relevant manufacturers' pharmacopoeias and carried out under controlled conditions. Soluble substances are infused directly in an alcohol/water mixture. Insoluble substances must first be ground down with lactose, using a pestle and mortar in a prescribed manner. This process is known as 'trituration'. Trituration proceeds until the ingredient has become fine enough to be soluble, using an alcohol/water mixture. The resulting solution is known in both cases as the 'mother tincture' and it is from these solutions that homeopathic remedies are derived.

Dilution and potentisation (dynamisation)

Beginning with the mother tincture, the dilution process gradually increases the strength of the remedy, since the more dilute it is the stronger or more 'potent' it becomes.

The potency of a remedy is a very precise concept. It refers to the extent and the number of times the mother tincture of that remedy has been diluted during the preparation. To give an example, Arnica 6c will have been prepared as follows:

One drop of the mother tincture of the Arnica plant is added to 99 drops of a solution of water and alcohol, and shaken or vibrated vigorously in a process known as 'succussion'. This diluted solution is known as the first centesimal potency of Arnica, or Arnica 1c.

One drop of this new solution (1c) is diluted again in a further 99 drops of the solution of water and alcohol, shaken vigorously and so becomes the second centesimal potency (Arnica 2c).

This process of serial dilution and succussion continues through the stages to Arnica 6c. By this stage the dilution will already be enormous - the 6c potency represents a dilution of one divided by a million million. In practice, any number of dilutions can be made. You may also come across remedies in the 'x' or 'decimal' potency. These are prepared in a ratio of 1 to 9 drops instead of the 1 to 99 drops of the 'c' or centesimal potency. The decimal potency is commonly used in Continental Europe.

If you wish to prescribe a remedy but the available potency is different from the one suggested in this book, do not despair or give up. *Use the potency that you have.* It is important to remember that the fundamental reason for prescribing a particular remedy is *the similarity of the symptoms of the animal with the symptom picture of the remedy.* The potency of the remedy is less important than the correct choice of the remedy.

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Dosage

Because the dose is a form of energy acting as a catalyst or stimulant, the actual size of the dose is not important in homeopathy. The amount would be the same for a horse as for a gerbil.

The frequency of the dose is important and depends on whether the condition is acute and urgent or chronic and longstanding. A guide to the appropriate dosage is given for every disease or condition described in the book. In some First Aid situations it may be beneficial to treat every 5-15 minutes for a while, whereas in chronic cases 1-3 times daily, possibly with breaks from time to time, may give better results.

If there is a favourable response to the chosen remedy but relief of the symptoms is not complete, it is worth repeating the remedy after a period of 7 to 10 days. If on the other hand the symptom picture has changed, or there has been no improvement to the existing symptoms, re-evaluate the situation and select the remedy which now appears to be more appropriate.

Do not continue to give a remedy when the symptoms have gone away. (See 'Amelioration', below.)

Aggravation

Occasionally the condition under treatment may appear to worsen after the first dose or two have been given. This is a well-established fact in homeopathy and is usually a good sign. If this happens, stop the treatment and improvement may well follow. If necessary repeat with a lower potency, or it is possible that a different remedy will be required. Consult a homeopathic veterinary surgeon if you are in any doubt.

Amelioration

Homeopaths use this term, the opposite of 'aggravation', when symptoms become better or there is an improvement in the general condition of the patient. In general a remedy should be stopped on improvement and be restarted only as and when the same symptoms return.

Administering and storing remedies

- 1) It is important, when possible, to give the remedy either 20-30 minutes before or after food. Do not let the animal drink for 20-30 minutes after treatment. The medicines are usually supplied as tablets or in individual doses as powders, and are thought to be absorbed from the mouth. For this

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reason it is preferable to place the remedy in the mouth or on the tongue rather than pushing it directly down the throat.

- 2) Study the advice at the beginning of each of the species sections as to how to administer the remedy to the animal in question.
- 3) The remedies are perfectly safe to be given to very young animals (only a few days old, if necessary) and to elderly animals. It is also quite safe to give them to a pregnant animal.
- 4) Homeopathic medicines do not interfere with conventional medicines but are better given with an interval of at least 20 minutes between the two. It is safe to give homeopathic medicines in cases where conventional treatment has already started. Do not discontinue the conventional prescription.
- 5) Keep the remedy in the container supplied and handle it as little as possible. Only the dose to be administered should be handled, and then with clean dry hands.
- 6) Remedies will be inactivated if spilled, handled more than necessary, exposed to sunlight, volatile substances or other contaminants. They should be stored away from light and kept at room temperature.
- 7) The containers should be kept tightly closed. Remedies in glass vials or bottles remain active for several years.

Definition of some terms used in this book

Constitutional remedies

As already mentioned, these are important remedies that exemplify the homeopathic concept of every patient as a unique individual. A constitutional remedy is one whose sphere of action extends over the whole physical and mental make-up of a person or animal.

Polychrests

This term, meaning 'many uses', refers to a group of frequently used remedies that can act over different parts of the body and over a wide variety of apparently unrelated symptoms. It follows from this that constitutional remedies will also be polychrests.

Nosodes

A nosode is a potentised homeopathic remedy prepared from diseased tissue or from an infected discharge. Under certain circumstances nosodes may have

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a role as an alternative to orthodox vaccines, but as yet there is no scientific evidence that they offer the same protection as orthodox vaccines. On the other hand, they do not carry the same risks and are free from side effects. The British Association of Homeopathic Veterinary Surgeons strongly recommends that nosodes should only be dispensed by veterinary surgeons experienced in homeopathy and that they should only be available on prescription.

Sarcodes

These are remedies made from 'healthy' material, such as snake venom, musk oil and so on. The term is not actually used in this book, although many of the remedies described are in fact sarcodes, and you may come across it when reading more widely in the homeopathic literature.

Modalities

Modalities are important in homeopathic medicine and are mentioned frequently throughout the book. They describe the 'better for' and 'worse for' symptoms and can be key indicators in the selection of the appropriate remedy. For example:

- 1) *Site*. For example, a pain that appears predominantly on the left or right side of the body.
- 2) *Time*. Pain that appears to be better or worse at certain times of the day or night, or at particular times of the month or seasons of the year.
- 3) *Weather*. Pain that appears to be affected by, and is better or worse for hot (or cold), dry (or wet or damp) conditions.
- 4) *Temperature*. Pain that appears to be better or worse for hot (or cold) applications.

Notifiable diseases

These are diseases which in one way or another can pose a danger to the community, whether human or animal. It is obligatory under law to notify them to the relevant authorities, which are listed in the front of the local telephone directory and in the Yellow Pages subsection immediately before the A-Z entries. Notification is the responsibility of the veterinary surgeon.

Zoonosis

Any infection or disease that is transmissible to man from the animal kingdom.

Working with your veterinary surgeon

It may be that you live a long way from the nearest homeopathic veterinary clinic and you may find that your usual vet is not convinced of the value of homeopathic medicine.

Try to retain their sympathy and concern by not demanding too insistently that they should share your conviction about the effectiveness of homeopathy, as everyone is entitled to their own opinion.

If you would like to seek qualified homeopathic veterinary advice, you can enquire further by contacting any of the sources shown on page 459. The owner of an animal is entitled to seek an opinion from any veterinary surgeon. However, it is important that the veterinary surgeon who is primarily responsible for the everyday care of the animal should be informed before you seek the second opinion.