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HERBS FOR ANIMALS - Helen Massingham-Howells

On reflection perhaps I should have called this piece Herbs for Horses! Nearly all of these remedies were used by the European Gypsies and they have proven their effectiveness through many generations. I am sure that you too, will find them helpful.

Most horses will take herbs when mixed with molasses or honey. Many times a brew with strong tasting herbs can be disguised with black currant syrup or honey, particularly if cider vinegar has been added.

Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)
"Hop tops" young shoots given to colts to condition them. A good tonic. Flowers fed in fodder to quiet restless animals, 1 or 2 cups for young animals, 2 or 3 cups (1 cup equals 1 handful) for adults.

Ivy, Common (*Glechoma Hederacea*)

Very good for internal cleansing after birth, 1 to 2 cups chopped herb for mares immediately after giving birth. In treating retained afterbirth make a strong brew; in 1 pint of water add 1 to 2 cups of common Ivy half pint drenches approximately every 3 hours. Do not confuse with Poison Ivy please!

Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla vulgaris*)

Horses like this herb so do sheep and goats. A good tonic. Parsley piert or *Alchemilla arvensis* is a gypsy cure for stones and a tonic after treating colic. It has been said that should man or animals take this herb on mid summers eve they could become invisible!! I have not tried that one, maybe one would have to take Woad (*Ivatis tinctoria*) to bring one back in sight.

Of course the bluish hue might startle a few animals and people!

Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*)

Used by gypsies as a spring tonic for horses, 1 to 2 cups of flowers cut up and mixed with mash or corn brew in 1.5 pints of water.

Nettle, Common (*Urtica dioica*)

Good forage dried for horses, rich in minerals, lime, sodium, iron, chlorine and a naturally good in protein value. Nettle juice mixed with nettle seeds is a good hair tonic: use internally 1 cup of juice in the animals mash. Use externally to wash the coat, it will give it a beautiful shine, beneficial for show or racehorses.

Oak (*Quercus robur*)

Gypsies used the ripe acorns ground and dried them and mixed them with wheat flour to make a gruel. The green cups are very

astringent and made into a strong brew are used to check bleeding internally and externally, 1 to 2 oz to 1.5 pints water.

Poplar, Black (*Populus nigra*)

Buds crushed in milk, honey and wine a good tonic for horses. For sores, wounds, ulcers. Used externally too (by making an ointment with the young buds).

Puffball (Fungus)

Used to stem bleeding and promote healing. Crushed and then applied to wounds.

Quince (*Pyrus Cydonia*).

Hair tonic for manes and tails. The peel is made into a brew 1 cup to 1 pint.

Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*)

Used as a talisman on banners and shields to protect war-horses and hopefully their riders. Good fodder. Effective for internal bleeding and wounds. Whole plant used make a brew or give 1 to 2 cupfuls of the herb in feed.

Scabious (*Scabiosa arvensis*) (Gypsy Rose)

Cleansing and antiseptic. A brew of the root and herb thickened with borax, removes old sores and dandruff. Mix about 2 cups herb and root to one and a half pints water. Put in 1 tablespoons of borax powder while still hot and stir well. Apply when cooled.

Strawberry or Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*)

Leaves help prevent abortion, fruit good for nervous or slow horses. Foliage good for show and racehorses. 2 cups of leaves or leaves and root daily or handful of berries daily.

Sweet Cicely (*Myrrhus odorata*)

Horses love this herb. A good tonic. Crush some or bruise the root and hold in the hand, they will usually come to one. Native

Indians used this trick to catch the wild horses. Note make sure you catch the right horse!

Tea Plant (Indian tea, China tea), (*Thea sinensis*)

Make a strong infusion, 2 parts to 1 of vinegar, (cider if possible). Soak cotton cloth when cold and apply. Very good for sun stroke, sunburn, fine burns. Dose internally: 1 dessert-spoon cider vinegar to 3 tablespoons tea mixture. Make the tea mixture with 2 tablespoons in 10 oz. hot water, add a pinch of cinnamon or 1 to 2 cloves or both. Give cold if possible.

Willow, White (*Salix alba*)

Young shoots and foliage given by gypsies for cattle and horses as a tonic

Willow (*Salix caprea*)

Given to goats to calm their hot tempers and cool their blood. I am not sure whether that means they gave it to the old goats or not. What is good for the animals is good for man too!

That's all I have space for just now. It's easy to forget that the "beasts of the field" originally taught us much of our herb law, (by our observations of them). They deserve more consideration than we often care to give them nowadays. By using these simple remedies we can do much to make their lives more comfortable and productive.

About the author:

Helen Massingham was born in England and has lived in Canada since 1967. She has spent most of her life working with animals,

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both on her father's estate and in the Far East. Long a proponent of Herbal Medicines for animals she is Regional Vice-President of the Canadian Equine Society.