

# Nature's Field

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## Alfalfa *Medicago sativa*

by Paula Perretty and Steven Horne

Best known as a plant cultivated for animal feed, alfalfa has a long history of dietary and medicinal uses. Found in recorded history as early as 500 BC, alfalfa was considered the “father of all foods” by the Arabs who discovered it in the Middle East. The Arabs fed it to their horses, claiming it made them swift and strong.

A legume related to beans and peas, alfalfa is very nutrient-rich. The plant is high in vitamins and minerals, containing A, D, E, B6, and K; folic acid, niacin, carotene, flavonoids, calcium, magnesium, chlorophyll, phosphorus, iron, potassium, trace minerals, mucilage, several digestive enzymes and other beneficial compounds. Alfalfa is reported to send roots deep into the ground (sometimes over 40 feet) so it can pick up minerals other plants can't reach. These properties make alfalfa a storehouse of nutrients for both animals and people.

In China, alfalfa has been used since the sixth century to treat kidney stones and to relieve fluid retention and swelling. According to Chinese medicine it is for use in the treatment of blood, stomach and spleen Qi deficiencies. It can help with anemia, debility and weight loss, gastrointestinal disorders, hyperacidity and ulcers. It clears the body of toxins, reduces pain associated with inflammation, strengthens blood vessels, promotes urination and protects the liver.

In Western herbalism, alfalfa is used to both cleanse and rebuild the blood, to improve digestion, promote lactation and as an aid for the glandular system. Many years ago, herbalist LaDean Griffin, author of *Is Any Sick Among You?* figured out that alfalfa aided the pituitary while trying to find answers for health problems in a child with a pituitary defect. By aiding the pituitary, alfalfa indirectly helps with the release of hormones responsible for metabolism and growth, blood pressure, water regulation, breast milk production and thyroid function. Alfalfa also contains phyto-estrogens making it useful in treating problems around menstruation and menopause, as well as in the prevention and treatment of breast and cervical cancer.



Photo by Stephen Foster

Alfalfa is a high-fiber herb (21% crude fiber, 42% dietary fiber), so alfalfa tablets have often been used to aid bowel function. They have been used for reducing cholesterol, binding toxins in the colon and protecting against colon cancer.

Alfalfa can help build the blood in cases of anemia. Pregnant women with anemia who have taken 12 alfalfa capsules and 4 yellow dock capsules daily have seen a rapid increase in blood iron levels. This program works much better than ordinary iron supplements, which can also be constipating.

Part of the reason alfalfa is helpful for the blood is because of its high chlorophyll content. In fact, liquid chlorophyll is extracted from alfalfa. Chlorophyll stimulates bone marrow to produce hemoglobin, the blood cell that carries oxygen to all cells and tissues in the body.

High in antioxidant flavonoids and vitamins, alfalfa helps in the prevention of arthritis and other conditions associated with inflammation. A highly alkalizing plant, it neutralizes waste acid. Alfalfa is sometimes included in respiratory formulas. The chlorophyll and vitamin K it contains can help in the treatment of hay fever and can soothe irritated mucus membranes.

Besides being available as a single, alfalfa is found in over 20 NSP formulas.

### Selected References:

*Principles and Practice of Phytotherapy* by Simon Mill and Kerry Bone  
*The Encyclopedia of Natural Remedies* by Louise Tenney  
*The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants* by Andrew Chevallier  
*The Energetics of Western Herbs* by Peter Holmes

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# Plants, Animals and People

by Steven H. Horne, RH (AHG)

In 1978, I discovered *Mother Earth News*—a magazine devoted to self-sufficient lifestyle—and became a loyal subscriber for many years. I loved reading about people who grew their own food, lived off the grid and otherwise enjoyed an existence that was not tied to a 9-5 job and a stack of bills. Not only did I devour every issue, I also bought lots of books on self-sufficiency and read them with relish, too.

Our theme this month is natural remedies for pets, and while plants have always been my primary passion, I've also enjoyed raising animals.

I never had a dog or cat growing up. My mom had been raised on a farm and believed that such animals weren't supposed to be in the house, but my ex-wives have gotten dogs and cats and I've helped take care of them. For instance, I've helped to wrap a cat up tightly in a towel so it couldn't scratch us while we opened its mouth and forced an herbal remedy into it. The cat didn't seem to appreciate the effort, but it did make the cat better.

Although I don't consider myself an expert on herbal medicine for animals, I haven't had any trouble figuring out what to do when the occasion required it. For the most part, the same plants that work on people work on animals, too. I've just used surrogate muscle testing and figured out what to give the ailing critter. It's always seemed to work.

I'd like to share one of my animal success stories, but it isn't about a dog or cat. It's about raising poultry. I've raised baby chickens, turkeys and ducks. The turkeys are the hardest. They get sick and die very easily. Books recommend using anti-biotic feed, but I'm too stubborn about antibiotics to do that. So, I tried raising them without antibiotics.

The first time I got 5 turkeys, the minimum order (along with 20 chickens) only one of the five turkeys survived to become an adult. We named him Pip-Pip because of the sound he'd make. He followed us around the yard like a cat or a dog and would sit on the grass next to you to keep you company. We never ate him—he got stolen.

The second time I tried raising turkeys I got smarter. I mixed powdered Azomite, a mineral-rich rock similar to montmorillonite, in their feed. Trace Mineral Maintenance tablets contain the montmorillonite and Colloidal Minerals are extracted from it. Since birds need a little grit in their feed, I figured it would also be a good way to get minerals into them. By the way, there are many studies showing that this clay is very beneficial when

fed to other animals, too. The clay not only provides minerals, it aids bowel health. Just crush up some Trace Mineral Maintenance tablets and put them in the feed.

I also mixed liquid chlorophyll, colloidal silver and golden-seal into their drinking water. That time, I only lost one of the five birds. Unfortunately, when we moved them into the coop, my daughter accidentally knocked a board over and crushed two more, so we wound up only having two. My wife named them Thanksgiving and Christmas so the kids would get the idea that we were planning to eat them.

We lost Christmas when we left for a week and our neighbor forgot to make sure our birds had enough water. Christmas died of dehydration. Oh, well, Thanksgiving tasted very good. (My apologies to any vegetarian or vegan readers.)

I raised turkeys one more time, using similar supplements and got four out of five birds to adulthood—antibiotic free. We let a neighbor have them because we couldn't keep poultry at our place. More about that later.

## Herbal Medicine and Natural Health Care for Pets

Animals usually respond very well to herbal medicine. In fact, in the wild, animals will instinctively eat certain plants when they are sick. I've read, for example, that the mongoose in India will utilize a species of plantain if it gets bitten by a poisonous snake. Dogs and cats often eat grass when ill, too.

In a study of chimps, two researchers found that a sick female chimp wouldn't eat her favorite food, but would only eat a bitter leaf called *Veronic amygdalina*. After 24 hours she was much better.

Holly T. Dublin, in a study of a pregnant elephant, found that directly before birthing, the elephant traveled much farther distances than it ever had before to eat the leaves of a tree from the Boraginaceae family, which she had never eaten before. This plant was found to induce labor.

As I've already indicated, most of the time the same herbs that work for people will also work for animals and all I do is muscle test to decide which remedies to use. If you don't know how to muscle test, there are good books you can get on herbs for animals. As a way to get you started, I've included the handout on the facing page as a quick reference.



# Herbal Remedies for Animals

A mini-guide to effective natural remedies for cats, dogs and horses

	Cats	Dogs	Horses
<b>Arthritis &amp; Structural</b>	Collatrim KB-C Chondroitin Glucosamine Everflex	Joint Support EverFlex MSM Collatrim Proactazyme	Joint Support EverFlex MSM Collatrim Proactazyme KB-C
<b>Bacterial Infections</b>	Colloidal Silver	Colloidal Silver Hi-Potency Garlic	Colloidal Silver Hi-Potency Garlic
<b>Cancer</b>	Paw Paw Cell-Reg E-Tea Immune Stimulator Lymphatic Drainage	Paw Paw Cell-Reg E-Tea Immune Stimulator Lymphatic Drainage	Paw Paw Cell-Reg E-Tea Immune Stimulator Lymphatic Drainage
<b>Dental</b>	Nature's Fresh	Nature's Fresh	Nature's Fresh
<b>Digestion</b>	Chlorophyll liquid Catnip and Fennel Probiotic Eleven	(IBS) Intestinal Soothe and Build Probiotic Eleven	Catnip and Fennel CLT-X Probiotics
<b>Hair &amp; Skin</b>	HSN-W Nature's Fresh Omega 3's	HSN-W Nature's Fresh Flax Seed Oil	HSN-W Nature's Fresh
<b>Kidney &amp; Bladder</b>	Kidney Drainage KB-C Kidney Activator Corn silk Red Raspberry	Kidney Drainage KB-C Kidney Activator Corn silk Red Raspberry	Kidney Drainage KB-C Kidney Activator Corn silk Red Raspberry
<b>Nervous System – Anxiety, Stress</b>	Distress Remedy Nervous Fatigue Herbal Sleep	Distress Remedy Nervous Fatigue	Adapt-A-Max Distress Remedy Nervous Fatigue
<b>Parasites</b>	GlycoEssentials Artemesia	GlycoEssentials (Heartworm) Artemesia	GlycoEssentials Artemesia
<b>Respiratory</b>	ALJ Cordyceps EW Lymph Drainage Histablock	ALJ Cordyceps EW Lymphatic Drainage Histablock	ALJ Cordyceps EW Lymphatic Drainage Seasonal Defense
<b>Thyroid</b>	Hyper-thyroid Melissa	Hypo-thyroid Dulse TS II	Dulse
<b>Viral Infections</b>	VS-C Super Omega-3 EPA	VS-C Super Omega-3 EPA	VS-C Colloidal Silver

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Distributed by:

This is one of the handouts that went out with our Gold and Silver Associate program package. (For those of you who aren't members of our Associate program we produce handouts for our subscribers each month.) The material was compiled by Kimberly Balas and my new research assistant, Paula Perretty. It's not a comprehensive guide, but gives you some good ideas.

If you're interested in learning more about keeping pets healthy naturally you should also check out our Sunshine Sharing and Herbal Hour Video this month. If you don't get Sunshine Sharing, talk to your upline Manager about getting it or join the Sunshine Business Alliance as a Gold or Silver member. If you want to order the Herbal Hour Video, you can do this on our website, [www.treelite.com](http://www.treelite.com) or by calling 800-416-2887.

The question naturally arises, how do you get animals to take herbs? Well, years ago, when I visited Tom and Jeanne Burgess in Oregon, they had trained their cat to swallow capsules. The cat would lie on its back in Jeanne's lap and she would give it the capsule and it would swallow it. (Jeanne Burgess, by the way, formulated some of NSP's best herbal products such as AL-J, Stress-J, Intestinal Soothe and Build, and LIV-J.)

I don't think most of us would have much success with that method. So, when giving herbs to animals, it's easiest to either

use liquids that you can squirt in their mouth or to open the capsules or crush the tablets and mix the powders with food. Since animals usually have pretty good instincts, they'll usually eat the herb if it's something they really need.

## Thoughts on the Recent Pet Food Scare

As many of you may know, recently quite a few people lost their pets because of some contaminated pet food. The good thing to come out of this is that many pet owners are switching to higher quality pet foods. Pet owners *should* be concerned about commercial pet food, just like people should be concerned about refined and processed foods.

Several years ago, a lady worked for me for a short time who had done some TV producing. She told me of a pet food expose she had created which wound up getting greatly edited before it aired. She discovered that pet food companies use the carcasses of diseased animals and "road kill" and throw them into a large vat where the material is rendered to create the "animal by-products" found in most pet food. Since that time I've also read that the carcasses of dogs and cats that are "put down" at the pound are also used to make these "animal by-products." Doesn't sound very healthy to me.

The problem, of course, isn't just with pet food; it's with our whole large-scale food manufacturing system. It's bad for everyone's health, people and animals alike.

At one time, most food was raised on small, family farms. These farms were often diverse in their nature, raising both plants and animals for food. Today, almost all of our food is raised in big, commercial monoculture farms. These farms create pollution, are more susceptible to contamination (as with spinach and *E. coli*) and produce lower quality food.

The solution to these problems is to encourage more small scale, ecologically diverse, family farms that produce "locally-grown" food. Unfortunately, our current cultural and political climate makes it harder for small scale producers.

For instance, there is a man in Leeds who is raising organic, grass-fed beef. He can't get his business off the ground because he isn't a big enough producer to deal with big companies, and the cost of shipping the beef makes it difficult to sell to individuals. He's also having a hard time getting his cattle processed because all the small meat-packing plants have shut down. He has to take the cattle a long distance to get them processed. He has had one local market carry it, but not many people are buying it. The local health food store won't touch it (but I think the owners are vegetarian). He also talked to Whole Foods and found they don't want to be bothered with small-time meat producers.

### About Nature's Field

Nature's Field started out as a printed publication, available by subscription only. Providing reliable information on natural healing for over twenty years, Nature's Field is now a free E-zine produced by Tree of Light Publishing.

### Production Staff

President and Managing Editor: Steven H. Horne  
 V.P. of Sales and Finance: Darla Steiner  
 Assistant Editor/Writer: Paula Perretty  
 Associate Editors: Carolyn Hughes, Hugh Hughes, Sharon Grimes  
 Researcher and Technical Editor: Kimberly Balas  
 Computers and Design: David Horne

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Now he's having problems because the new director of the Lake Powell recreation area doesn't want to honor his grazing permits. It seems tourists don't like to see cows on their recreational land. All this is very sad, because I've purchased some of his grass-fed beef and it is wonderful—the best meat I've ever tasted.

Unfortunately, upcoming government regulations may make the problem even worse. For those of you who don't follow such things, I might mention that the USDA is pushing for an electronic animal-tagging system that would be very costly for small producers and would likely put them out of business. It would require all farm animals to be electronically tagged and their movements to be reported and tracked on a computer system. These laws might even apply to someone, who, like me, only wants a few chickens in their backyard. Just as we're having to fight to keep the FDA from creating legislation to put alternative medicine out of business, organic farmers and small-time growers are facing similar issues with USDA.

## Plants, Animals and People Living in Harmony

Good things happen when animals, plants and people co-exist harmoniously. I started off mentioning *Mother Earth News* because I really enjoy raising food. Right now, I have an acre of land and a very nice vegetable garden going. I've already harvested radishes, spinach, beet greens, chard and turnip greens from the garden. Later in the summer, I'll have tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, zucchini, corn, beans, carrots, turnips, lettuce and beets. By fall I'll have potatoes, parsnips, squashes, onions and Jerusalem artichokes. I personally find that no produce I can buy at the store, even organic, is equal in quality to what I can grow myself.

I'd like to have chickens again, too. Partly because the eggs from home-raised chickens are better than any I've ever been able to buy at the store, but also because they would work synergistically with my gardening. For example, I've felt bad about pulling up some of my baby carrots, etc. to thin them, but if I had chickens I'd be able to toss these (and my table scraps) to the chickens, who would turn them into fresh eggs.

Chickens also provide great pest controls. In places where I've had chickens I've had fewer bug problems in the garden. (Of course, I have to be careful when I let them in the garden. Chickens love ripe tomatoes and Pip-Pip, the turkey, once ate a whole row of my onions to the ground.)

When I lived in Elk Ridge, Utah, there was a serious grasshopper problem there. The community routinely sprayed toxic chemicals to control the grasshoppers. My wife and I didn't want our yard sprayed. One of my neighbors had a cat that wandered into a recently sprayed open lot and fell over dead.

We knew that a few chickens or turkeys would easily control the grasshoppers in our yard and we put four hens in our very large back yard, which was completely fenced. Unfortunately, toxic chemicals are an acceptable form of pest control in suburbia, chickens are not.

Several of our neighbors complained. Our chickens made no real noise because we didn't have a rooster and they didn't produce any odor, either, but the neighbors still complained. Never mind that one neighbor's dog produced far more odor and noise than our chickens. People have funny attitudes about "food" animals. I think it's part of the disconnection from nature that most people in our society suffer from, which I've talked about in other recent articles. They feel more comfortable with the sterile, chemical-laden offerings of the commercial food industry than they do with food they can "get close to."

## Using Animals for Food

The most unpleasant part of raising chickens for me has been butchering some from time to time. (This is where vegetarians and vegans may wish to stop reading.)

I'm not a vegetarian. I tried being a vegetarian, but I didn't feel healthy living that lifestyle. I don't feel healthy if I eat too much meat, either, but I feel better when I have at least some animal protein in my diet.

I know that some people feel that killing animals is wrong and that being a vegetarian is a higher spiritual path. As a person who absolutely loves plants, I have a hard time swallowing this idea. You see, I can't make a judgment in my mind that one form of life is more "special" than another form of life. I tend to feel more aligned with the Native American point of view that all forms of life are sacred.

The last time I butchered chickens I did it the way Native Americans taught. I thanked God for the life of the animal and thanked the animal for sacrificing its life to feed me before killing it. I now offer the same prayer when I gather produce from my garden.

It's not a pleasant job to butcher a chicken or clean a fish, but I'm glad I've done it, partly because it's given me important survival skills, but more importantly because I decided that if I was going to eat meat I had to face the fact that animals die to feed me. So do plants, and I think if we were closer to the source of food production we'd have a better relationship with food. We'd have more gratitude for it and a greater sense of reverence about what it takes to keep us alive.

Every day, something dies so that you can live—a sobering thought, which is why we should hold sacred the relationships between plants, animals and people—all a part of the wonderful fabric of life on this planet. And all dependant on one another for life and health.



## Kimberly Balas' Clinician's Corner

# Animal-Related Questions

### Colic in Horses

*I need ideas about what to do with a horse that keeps having colic problems.*

BB

The Catnip and Fennel formula, used along with peppermint, works quickly to relieve colic in horses. If you have to do an enema I would suggest using flax oil instead of the mineral oil that is typically recommended. Colic can also be caused by an excess of silica in the diet. If this is the case, I would try some Herbal Trace Minerals to balance the silica out.

### Deworming Horses

*What would be a good substitute for de-worming horses—including tapeworms! The latest product on the market is moxidectin/praziquantel, which sounds as lethal as ivermectin from the warnings on the label. I once accidentally overdosed my cats on ivermectin and I know from that experience that it is a very potent chemical that has consequences involving the nervous system!*

CG

I use the Paw Paw and Herbal Pumpkin. It just takes 2 Paw Paw per week and two Herbal Pumpkin per day for 14 days.

### Cats and Colloidal Silver

*Is it OK to give cats colloidal silver when they are sick? If so, how much do you give them?*

Jeanne

Yes, Colloidal Silver is a good remedy for cats, and for dogs and horses, too. I usually do just a few drops 3-4 times per day.

### Dog with Congestive Heart Disease

*My 6-year-old dog is dying of congestive heart disease; no hope is on the horizon. He is on one-half of the originally prescribed medication. His quality of life is good, although he is unable to run or chase birds anymore. Can you suggest anything to help him feel better in his last days?*

Debbie

I would use the Lymphatic Drainage Formula and two grams of l-arginine per day. We did this for our horse that was in congestive heart failure and it turned him around. (I adjusted the quantities for a dog. We gave more to the horse.)

### IF Relief and Dogs

*Could you use IF Relief to help ease the pain of arthritis in an elderly dog? I really don't want to pay for a prescription drug for her, but I hate to see her stumbling all over the house because she can't stand up.*

NB

I use IF with our dog. He loves it sprinkled over his food. Joint Support and Everflex have also helped dogs with arthritis. I would also give the dog Liquid Dulse for iodine. Dogs tend to have low thyroid.

Salicylic acid, found in willow bark, isn't good for dogs. They don't break it down and it can stress their kidneys. However, there is such a small amount in these formulas that it poses no problem.

### Jellyfish Stings

*Do you know of a good remedy for a jellyfish sting?*

JH

The best thing is to apply something acidic immediately as this neutralizes the venom. I would try doing some topical ascorbic acid from Vitamin C Ascorbates. One remedy the locals (when I lived at the beach) used was pouring beer on it. Nature's Fresh and lavender oil have also been reported to work well.

### Boils on a Dog

*Can you use Ho Shou Wu topically on dogs to draw out boils?*

Lisa

Yes, although this can be challenging because you have to keep it on them and not allow them to lick it off. You can also try giving infection-fighting and lymph-moving herbs internally such as VS-C and Lymphatic Drainage.

Kimberly Balas is a board certified naturopath and clinical nutritionist. She is currently head of the research department and a certified instructor for all Tree of Light courses. She is available for consultations by phone or at her Wyoming office. For more information on scheduling a consult, please phone 307-277-2466.

