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Herbs for your pet

BY GRAHAM HAWORTH
Sentinel Staff writer

If you have a dog, cat, rat, bird, snake, goat, horse or hamster around the house or garden, chances are you care for that animal almost like a member of the family. Animals suffer from many of the same afflictions as humans, from arthritis to tummy aches, skin rashes to diarrhea.

With the help of local herbalist and acupuncturist Martha Benedict, C.A., O.M.D., you can now help alleviate your pets' ailments through the use of organic herbal remedies.

Imagine if you or your child came down with a particularly nasty case of the flu. You'd want to find the healthiest available remedy.

"Why would you not do the same thing for the object of your enormous affection as you would for yourself?" asked Benedict, who has more than 35 years experience making herbal formulas for humans and 25 years experience concocting herbal pet remedies.

"There's no question that herbal remedies can be helpful," said Dr. Hannah Good, who works at Ocean Animal Clinic and also runs her own house call practice. "The biggest problem is that people sometimes treat their own animals without knowing a diagnosis, and expect immediate results. That's an inelegant approach."

Good, who practices an integrative approach to animal medicine, said these herbal remedies are not meant to be a replacement for a visit to the vet, a view that is shared by Benedict.

Benedict is the president of Love My Pet, a company that offers eight different liquid-based organic herbal remedies: Arthritis Relief, Diarrhea Relief, Immune Boost, Kidney and Bladder Relief, Skin Comfort, Stinky Ear Oil, Stress Relief and Tummy Ease.

Some typical ingredients of the formulas include organic alfalfa, plantain, yarrow, burdock, tumeric, boswellia and yucca. They cost between \$17 and \$21 for a 0.2 ounce vial. Dosage depends on the animal's weight. Lighter ones require one or two drops, while your big golden retriever would need six to 10 drops.

The beautiful backyard of Benedict's home near Pasatiempo Golf Course doubles as an herb garden filled with traditional Chinese remedies. A good deal of the herbs used in her pet remedies are grown here. On a recent walk around her yard on a bright, sunny winter afternoon, Benedict's passion for the health of all beings around her shines through.

"I'm mostly about education," said Benedict, whose slight stature belies her enthusiasm and vast knowledge of homeopathics. "The thing I'm most married to is sustainable medicine, for both humans and animals." Aside from Love My Pet, she also performs acupuncture in her studio on Locust Street in downtown Santa Cruz.

Twenty-five years ago, the idea for Love My Pet began with the family rat named Rosie. Rosie suffered from the after effects of surgery to remove a tumor, and the prognosis was not good. The Benedict children begged their mother to create a potion to help Rosie recover. The rat ended up living for three years, a full year beyond a healthy rat's average lifespan.

Love My Pet products come in liquid form, formulated to taste good. Anyone who has ever tried to shove a pill down a cat's throat can understand the advantage of a liquid remedy. Benedict said some of her client's cats have been known to come running when their owner reaches for the vial of Love My Pet.

Contact Graham Haworth at ghaworth@santacruzsentinel.com

More Information

WHAT: Learn more about Love My Pet products at www.lovemypet.us or call 877-429-9221.

Dr. Hannah Good runs her own house call veterinary service. For details call 427-2077.

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