

Robert McDowell's Herbal Treatments

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Relationships between human fingernail health and equine hoof treatments:

When a patient called last evening asking if she could use my Hoof Oil for her weak fingernails, it set me to thinking about fingernail and hair health and their relationship to the treatments I use for horse's hooves.

Upon questioning this particular lady she revealed that her hair which, she wears long, grows phenomenally fast and strong and that she is most proud of her 'mane'. The only bother is that it really needed trimming every four to six weeks. She also revealed that the only time her fingernails were healthy and strong was during pregnancy and when she was feeding her babies.

Minerals and Absorption:

Health and strength in nails (both human and equine) depend on a good balance between calcium and silica in the diet and a system, which can metabolize and make good use of these minerals efficiently.

In my equine treatments I prescribe internal supplements based around Millet, Linseed, Comfrey and Yarrow which provide the ideal nutrition to grow healthy bones, ligaments and other hard tissue like hooves. Horses have diets which are usually very high in Silica (found in all dried feed in abundance) and there is usually sufficient Calcium as well (also found in dried and fresh feed and grains). Sometimes there is a deficiency in other minerals like Magnesium, which is also involved, in structural health and this is the reason that a little Dolomite is useful to ensure sufficient Magnesium (and Calcium). Most horses have healthy enough metabolisms even if restricted to poor pasture as they are not nearly as likely to abuse their metabolism through bad eating habits or stress as we do.

Humans often don't have enough Silica in their Diets and they often have far too much Calcium. We are told that we must drink milk to grow strong bones and all the rest but in fact westerners mostly have too much Calcium and not enough of the other minerals required and are actually worse off than we would have been without milk at all. In my internal treatments for human nails I use the herb Equisetum (also called Horsetail) which is extraordinarily high in Silica and I also use Yarrow and Comfrey just like in the Hoof treatments. The whole issue of diet of course enters into any discussion of health with my human patients and I often make recommendations on diet where this is an issue.

Sometimes in humans these herbs on their own are sufficient, but my patient's report that she has healthy nails during pregnancy and breast feeding tells me that there are metabolism issues at work here also. A foetus is programmed to ensure that its mothers system is working at peak while it is growing inside her and her metabolism is given a tune-up to make sure this is so. In my patients case there are obviously metabolic inefficiencies, which need to be addressed as well as mineral intake, discussed above, and circulation and stress, discussed below.

Circulation:

When the correct herbs and supplements alone don't seem to make much difference

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to a horse's hoof health it is generally because the circulation all the way down to the hoof is pretty limited and the problem is really a delivery problem. The ingredients are in the diet and carried within the blood but the blood supply is not sufficient to get enough of the minerals down to the hoof. I address this problem by making up an hoof oil preparation containing herbs which dramatically stimulate both the circulation within the hoof and the healing potential for any damaged or weakened structures.

There is much more blood down in our fingertips than there is in a horse's hoof. However there are many people who suffer from cold hands and feet or even circulation problems specific to the fingertips like Reynard's disease and for these I include herbs like Nettle, Rue and Prickly Ash to improve peripheral circulation. I also prescribe the equine hoof oil preparation because of its ability to stimulate normal growth and healing, as there is commonly a problem right at the root where the nails are formed.

A simple dietary, circulation and metabolic tonic is Rosehips tea, which also contains biotin, another ingredient essential to healthy nails.

Stress:

Horses hooves can be stressed due to the surfaces they are walking on, their shoes and the skill of their farriers. Their circulation can be stressed by limiting them to small stables and yards where they cannot move freely and therefore cannot pump blood up from the hoof. This pumping action works through the pressure of the pedal bone on the blood vessels in the hoof and requires plenty of movement. In the wild as grazing animals the horses would be moving about constantly as they feed, not standing in a stable feeding from a fixed receptacle. Emotional stress however seems not to play any significant part in hoof health.

Humans don't normally place physical stresses on their nails apart from those that chew or pick at them constantly. Humans certainly do affect both their metabolism and their circulation often enough through their stress handling habits.

Reynard's disease mentioned, is a particular condition where the circulation at the fingertips is restricted through the action of stress on blood vessels serving the fingertips. This restriction can be so severe that the tips even die like in cases of frostbite.

More commonly in humans, the effect of stress on their metabolic efficiency is a more important factor in fingernail health. This is where eating patterns and habits again feature in my recommendations for patients worried about the health of their fingernails.

In conclusion:

We can see that although I prescribe similar herbs in internal and external treatments for human nails as I do for horse's hooves, the underlying factors are significantly different.

If you wish to trial a standard internal mixture for your own fingernails containing circulatory herbs and mineral sources it can be ordered by [clicking here](#). I would

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recommend that you massaged the herbal Hoof Oil into your fingertips once per day as well.

If you wish to submit to a full consultation processes to get to the bottom of your fingernail and other more profound health problems [click here](#).

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