

Robert McDowell's Herbal Treatments

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Natural Medicine and the Revolution in Equine Health Care:

The past 20 years in Australia and around the world has seen Alternative Medicine in human Health Care change from something only contemplated by a fringe minority to securing mainstream acceptance. This revolution is still gaining momentum with orthodox medicine now scrambling to claim herbs for their own purposes in treating drug resistant viral and bacterial infections along with Aids, Cancers and an ever increasing array of illnesses which seem to be a result of the 20th Century more than anything else.

In the horse industry, there has always been an acceptance of the old fashioned remedies passed down through the generations. These have been mostly shouldered aside in the past 30 years by a spectacular growth in the Veterinary Medical and Feed and Supplement Industries. During the same 30 year period, horses have become more fragile, more highly strung and more expensive to maintain than at any previous time in history.

It is no coincidence that big business of all colors now permeate the whole of the Equine Industry. This is all the way through from Breeding, Rearing, Processed Feed, Vitamins and Feed Additives, Veterinary Care, Veterinary Medicines to the end results of Racing and Competition, Betting and Gambling (legal and otherwise), Taxation Income, Illegal Drugs and Drug Testing. All Big Bucks.

Lots of you have been around long enough to wonder what happened to the talented horse which was largely pasture fed and which pretty much looked after its own health. When problems arose the owner would consult with his farrier or his neighbour or a do-it-yourself health book, for advice on treatment of illness or injury.

Following directly in the path of the movement in human health care toward Alternative Therapies is alternative treatment for horses. The only difference is that the general acceptance of alternative care for horses will be here within the next 2 or 3 years rather than the 20 years it has taken for alternative human health care to be accepted as it is now.

Two years from now:

-You will not be using anti-biotics or sending animals to Veterinary Hospitals for operations except as an absolute last resort in view of the danger of contracting exotic and drug resistant viral and bacterial infections which are beginning to flourish in the post anti-biotic era. You will be treating your own infective diseases using herbal and other home remedies and dietary programs.

-You will be using natural parasite control and growing weeds and herbs in hedgerows which you will be cultivating in your fields.

-You will be seeking natural rather than "improved" pasture for adjustment and spelling your animals and paying a premium for certified organic and chemical free feed.

-You will not have a tack room full of supplements, vitamins and feed additives but rather a small number of Herbal Medicines and Tonics. You will confidently treat injury and trauma on the spot and your herbal and feeding programs will be focused on preventative maintenance and long

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term good health to maximize your investment in acquiring and training the animal rather than just on next Saturday's race.

-Highly sophisticated drug testing will be a part of all competition with severe penalties in place. These tests will deny you the use of pretty much all the strong medicine you currently use for treating trauma, pain, nervous system problems and for performance enhancement.

-You will be preparing Yearlings and Two Year Olds for sale and for work at home with carefully designed programs of herbal feed supplements, exercise, training and play. This will produce a product which not only looks good but which has matured physically and emotionally, has an enhanced immune system and has the endurance and health for a long and productive working life.

-Your focus will be on rehabilitating valuable animals, rather than dumping them. You will be sending your horses, at the very first signs of problems, to specialist health farms who will rehabilitate and spell the animals using Herbal and other Alternative Treatments and intelligent handling and pre-training programs to return them fully sound in a fraction of the time of current spelling practices.

All this sounds unbelievable in an environment where science and the supplement and drug industries seem to dominate, but the fact is that scientific medicine is in crisis. Antibiotics, having been over-prescribed for 40 years, no longer work. Our medical institutions are now infested by super-resistant bacteria and are dangerous places to go to. Viral infections are crossing species lines, cancers and immune system diseases are proliferating much faster than we can control them and the whole western medical infrastructure is so expensive world wide that it threatens to send entire economies bankrupt.

In the Equine Industry all this is also true and owners and trainers are poised to change completely the way they feed and medicate their horses. This change will be extremely rapid and will transform the industry over the next three or four years. Watch for it happening, it is not just a theory about some far distant time in the future, it is happening right now. Right here at this Conference.

Most of you will have already noticed that Vets are suddenly embracing alternative modalities like Acupuncture, Massage and Chiropractic and you already know people who swear by Herbal Medicine. Pretty soon Vets will be prescribing herbs and the words Herbal and Natural will begin to appear in all the Veterinary Medical and Feed Supplement advertising material.

For the first few years of this revolution there will be very, very few people with the training and experience to fill the vacuum and it will be also very difficult to find qualified herbal practitioners who have any real experience in the field.

There are three reasons why I have written my do-it-yourself book on herbal treatments for horses.

Firstly to provide a guide to herbalists trained in human treatments to convert over to equine practice.

Secondly to provide information for the owner to fill in the gaps in the meantime and treat their own animals.

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Thirdly to give you the owner enough information so that you may be able to judge a practitioner claiming to be qualified in the field.

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