

dogs naturally

January - February 2020

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Corn Silk

Botanical Name: *Zea mays*

Family: Gramineae or Poaceae

Parts Used: Stiles and stigmas

Corn silk is the long silky fibers at the top of an ear of corn. You can use it fresh or dried – though fresh is crisper and brighter. Fresh corn silk has more oils (oleic, palmitic, stearic acids) in the extract. It contains vitamins C and K, gums, resins, bitter glycosides, flavones, alkaloids, mucilage, tannins, allantoin, and mucilage.

Corn silk's actions are diuretic, antiseptic, antilithic (prevents stone formation), soothing urinary demulcent, antioxidant, anti-depressant, anti-inflammatory, anti-fatigue; it reduces hyperglycemia and is a general tonic, heart tonic and vulnerary.

Corn silk can reduce kidney and bladder stones as well as inflammation of the kidneys. It can help with urinary tract infections, incontinence, irritable bladder, prostate gland enlargement, and fluid retention.

While it seems soft and light, it's a powerhouse of chemistry that works in the dogs' body gently, but with great strength. What I love about corn silk is that it can correct both urinary retention *and* urinary incontinence – the definition of a true tonic – and it's safe and effective for dogs and cats. You can easily find organic, local corn silk, and it's inexpensive.

Corn silk can tonify the heart and cardiovascular vessels. Combining it with hawthorn leaf, flower and berry can help dogs with various cardiovascular issues: congestive heart failure (CHF), murmurs, and irregular heartbeats. The diuretic

action helps remove excess fluid around the heart. Adding dandelion leaf will help move out the excess fluid as well as provide potassium. Conventional diuretics deplete potassium in the body, so dandelion is a better choice.

Corn silk reduces hyperglycemia, helping to balance high glucose levels, especially when combined in equal parts with the herb gymnema. It may not correct the issue in every dog, but will keep the glucose balance within a healthy range in most cases.

I use corn silk in several of my formulas, especially for cardiovascular, urinary tract infections and incontinence. It can quickly clear urinary tract infections; it can also help with urinary incontinence (UI), especially from physical injury or early spay.

Several herbs work synergistically with corn silk for urinary tract infections; they reduce inflammation, remove bacteria, balance urine pH, cool and soothe the urinary tract, and provide nearly immediate pain relief:

Oregon grape root (alterative, antimicrobial, clears damp-heat, protects the kidneys)

Usnea (a lichen that is gentle, yet powerful, anti-bacterial, demulcent, expectorant)

Mallow root (anti-inflammatory, emollient for soothing properties, demulcent to the urinary tract)

Roasted dandelion root (anti-inflammatory, clears infection in bladder, kidneys, and urethra)

Dandelion leaf (potassium-rich diuretic, purifies the blood, bitter, anti-inflammatory)

Yarrow (provides volatile oils that flow from kidneys to urinary tract, clears infection and is cooling, a circulatory stimulant)

You can make a corn silk tea with organic, non-GMO corn silk that's fresh from the unripened ear of corn. Add ½ cup of the fresh silk to 2 cups of clean water, simmer gently for 45 mins, then let it cool. Strain out the silk (use it for compost). Save the tea in a glass jar in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. For every 25 pounds of body weight, give 3 tablespoons once daily, on its own or in food, as a tonic for the heart or urinary tract and kidneys.

Cautions: Safe use with pregnant animals has not been determined that I could find; although both older and newer research shows corn silk to be non-toxic and safe for pregnant or nursing humans. 🐾



Joyce Belcher is an herbalist and formulator of pet supplements and herbal medicinals for veterinarians and is the founder of Herbs for Life Inc and Sustenance Herbs. She lives in Kittery, Maine with her husband, Aja the Poodle and two cats; they are all rescues.

Visit Joyce at sustenanceherbs.com