



Dogs Naturally

Be your dog's hero

Why Are Pet Foods Making
PEOPLE SICK?

REBALANCING WITH
CELL SALTS

VESTIBULAR
DISEASE

HOMEOPATHY
AND CANCER

VEGANISM
FOR DOGS?

ENERGY
HEALING



Usnea barbata

Family: *Parmeliaceae*

Part Used: Whole lichen

Common Names: Old Man's Beard, Beard Lichen, Beard Moss

Actions: Clears heat, moves damp, resolves toxicity

Usnea is widespread lichen (a combination of algae and fungi that grow together and function as a single organism) that grows on trees in cool, moist places on every continent. Depending on where you are, you can find usnea on trees such as spruce, fir, oak, pine and cottonwood. It can resemble moss but is not related. It's strongly antimicrobial and is a gram-positive bacteria – meaning it can kill a wide range of invading pathogens without killing healthy bacteria (as antibiotics do) while keeping gut flora healthy.

Usnea is a symbiotic combination of an alga and a fungus. The outer part with its hairy, grey-green, sometimes yellowish color contains the antibacterial properties; the inner part, a thin white thread that is elastic when wet, contains the immune stimulating properties.

Usnea has been used historically in veterinary medicine to treat many types of respiratory infections including pneumonia and upper respiratory tract infections, as well as for viral immunity and urinary tract infections.



Joyce Belcher is an herbalist/formulator of pet supplements and herbal medicinals for veterinarians and is the founder of Herbs for Life Inc. She lives in York, Maine with her husband, two dogs and two cats; they are all rescues. Visit Joyce at petwellnessblends.com

Usnea is antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal and antimicrobial making it a sound choice for a myriad of ailments, infections and wounds, both internal and external. It can be used for pain relief, helps to draw phlegm, to treat mucous membrane inflammation in the mouth and larynx; it's highly indicated for strep throat, candida and lung infections.

When treating urinary tract and bladder infections, usnea combines well with echinacea, Oregon grape root, marshmallow and corn silk in dogs and cats as well as people due to its antibiotic properties, which are most specific to the urinary, kidney, bladder and respiratory systems. It's safe to use with animals, people and children, with no known contraindications, except that it shouldn't be used during pregnancy and should be avoided with gallstones as it will increase the release of bile.

Usnea can be made into a powder or used whole and applied to skin infections as a topical antibiotic with quick healing results. It is not water soluble so the medicine is best extracted as an alcohol tincture, brewed as a tea, used directly on skin as a poultice or powder for abrasions or infections including abscesses, or made into a salve.

As a lichen, usnea absorbs from the environment so take special care that your collection is in a non-toxic environment free of heavy metals or other environmental pollutants.

When making any plant medicine, know your harvest or collection area well to be certain it is not roadside, where there is potential for toxins from vehicle fumes, or near where chemicals are sprayed as these can leech into the root or the aerial parts.

Stephen Harrod Buhner writes in *Sacred Plant Medicine*:

“Usnea helps fight off infection in the trees, and thus serves a crucial function in maintaining rainfall patterns. A potent aspect of Usnea's power is that of the power of TREE.” 

