

dogs naturally

March - April 2019

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Eyebright

Botanical Name: *Euphrasia officinalis*

Family: Scrophulariaceae

Parts Used: Flower, Leaves

According to Chinese philosophy, the liver is the internal organ that coincides with the eye as an external organ of the body. Therefore, because eyebright is a blood purifier that enhances liver function, it's said to strengthen the eyes. It's also said to have been used for many types of eye infections by the Greek philosopher Theophrastus, known as the "father of botany."

According to the doctrine of signatures (the belief that a plant looks like the body part or condition it can heal), the eyebright flower resembles bloodshot eyes, so it can remedy diseases or maladies of the eye. The flower has purple and yellow stripes on a white petal (sometimes a purple petal), like an eye with curly lashes. It grows from two to eight inches tall in North America, Europe and Asia, blooming between July and September. It has a look of its own and there is no mistaking eyebright.

The benefits of eyebright come from its nutrients and compounds; it's high in calcium, magnesium, manganese, niacin, riboflavin, silicon, thiamine, protein, zinc, vitamins A, B and C, potassium, iron, aluminum, flavonoids, volatile oils and beta carotene.

Eyebright has antibiotic and astringent properties that are exceptional for clean-

ing the eyes and may provide systemic stimulation of the liver, helping to release vitamin A that makes its path to the eye. It's used primarily in its homeopathic form as an eye drop to treat pink eye and various inflammatory eye diseases, inflammation in the eyelash follicles and accidental causes of inflammation. It's very soothing to sore and stressed eyes caused by environmental issues, over-straining, conjunctivitis and aging eyes. This relief comes from its tannin properties, which are anti-inflammatory.

Some of the common uses for eyebright for dogs include allergies that affect the upper respiratory system, coughs that are dry and unproductive as well as those that produce mucus or phlegm, headaches or irritated sinuses.

Using a tea from dry or fresh eyebright herb has proven helpful for improving vision due to the volatile oils and the antioxidants that it provides nutritionally. You can make this tea by adding $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the dried or fresh herb to 2 to 3 cups of distilled or spring water, heat to just before boiling point, turn to simmer for 12 to 18 minutes. Let stand for 1 hour before pouring through fine mesh strainer, then add to your dog's meal or give it on its own if your pup will drink it. Give 1 teaspoon once or twice daily per 40 lbs of body weight, for supplemental vision strength-

ening. Keep the tea in a glass container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

A cold compress made with the eyebright tea will help reduce and negate inflammation and pain in the eye. You can use a muslin (or any non-lint cloth) and moisten with cold eyebright tea; place over the eye and gently press for up to 10 minutes, or as long as your dog will tolerate it. This will feel good to her so compliance shouldn't be an issue and you can repeat this several times during the day as needed. This compress will also help to heal wounds anywhere on the body.

I've not found any definitive cautions or safety for eyebright with dogs or people as there hasn't been a lot of research done or shared on this herb. I do advise not giving it internally to pregnant or lactating dogs as safe use isn't confirmed. 🐾



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