



Slippery Elm Bark

Common Name: Indian Elm

Botanical Name: *Ulmus Fulva*

Family: Ulmaceae

Parts Used: Inner Bark

Slippery elm is native to the United States and Canada, with the highest concentration north of the Carolinas and west of the Appalachians. The name *Ulmus* is from the Celtic “ulm” or elm meaning trunk. *Fulva* is from the Latin “fulvis” meaning deep yellow or tawny, which refers to the color of the inner bark. The color is important when buying this herb as the outer bark contains large amounts of tannin and crude fiber that can contaminate the herb’s inner bark. Be sure the slippery elm bark product you buy is a creamy color, whether chopped or powdered. That way you’ll know you’re getting an uncontaminated product for your pup.

Slippery elm bark is high in calcium, niacin, riboflavin, thiamine, vitamins A and C as well as dietary fiber, carbohydrates and selenium. It lowers bowel transit time, absorbs toxins from the bowel and regulates intestinal flora. Its actions are demulcent (on the digestive tract), astringent and expectorant.

The plant’s mucilage content coats, soothes and lubricates the mucous membranes lining the digestive tract. That makes it an excellent treatment for ulcers, gastritis, colitis and other inflammatory bowel problems. Because it’s high in fiber, it can help to normalize intestinal imbalances.

The gastrointestinal (GI) tract is a large, muscular tube that is home to all the functional structures between the mouth and the anus. It creates a continuous passageway that allows for digestion of food via the release of enzymes and hormones. This is referred to as the gut or alimentary canal and includes the stomach, small and large intestines.

The GI tract can become out of balance for a myriad of reasons, whether antibiotic or steroid use, something your dog ate, toxic chemicals or foods that can be harmful to dogs – and the biggest culprit is stress! That’s right, stress wreaks havoc on the GI tract in all of us, but it may take us a while to figure it out with our pups. Whatever the cause, slippery elm bark can help bring balance back to this vital throughway.

If your pup is showing signs of loose stools, diarrhea, acid reflux (bringing up yellow bile), vomiting, has eaten the neighbors’ trash, shows lack of appetite or no interest in food he normally would love, slippery elm bark can be very helpful and comforting for him. It’s great for cats too!



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

The powder and the inner bark shreds will make a mucilaginous gel when lightly heated in water. Use one part slippery elm bark to three parts water, bring to a simmer for 10 to 12 minutes, turn off the heat and let it stand for 30 minutes. If you use the bark shreds, use a fine mesh strainer to remove them after heating and cooling. Dose this at 1 tsp per 15 lbs of body weight, preferably using a syringe to place the gel directly in the mouth.

Slippery elm bark blends with several herbs for ultimate soothing and healing, including irritable bowel, ulcers and to help with pancreatitis when mixed with pure fresh aloe from the center of the leaf (no green, only the center).

The synergy with mallow root is more soothing than the slippery elm bark alone, but if you think there is bacteria involved due to your dog eating something off color, add nettle seed (which will also support the kidneys). Chamomile is an anti-spasmodic that can help ease the discomfort of inflammation in the GI tract, and licorice root is a necessary addition if you’re dealing with ulcers. 🐾