



Dogs Naturally

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dog owner's guide to

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SPECIAL PUPPY ISSUE

Horsetail

Botanical name: *Equisetum arvense*

Native to North America and Russia, growing in sandy, marshy areas

Parts Used: Stem

The Doctrine of Signatures assigned horsetail as a cure for gout and other joint inflammations because of its many unswollen joints. Older authors like Culpepper put the plant signature on kidney medicine because plants that grow in wet sands are particularly strong kidney medicines as both sand (like urinary gravel) and water are signatures pointing to this organ.

Horsetail is a lovely, soft flowing, breezy-looking plant with whorls of piney branches that extend from the stem. It resembles a small Christmas tree and has pinecone-shaped pods at the end of the stem, producing thousands of germinating spores. The stems look a bit like asparagus or tiny bamboo as they are darkish green, hollow, and jointed or segmented.

Horsetail grows in wet areas, fields, woodlands and marshes all across America into Russia and is considered a noxious and invasive weed in some states. Drought affects it and can deplete the regrowth. It is commonly called bottle brush, foxtail, pinetop, meadow pine, shave grass, and joint grass.

In the wild, aquatic horsetail provides habitat and food for invertebrates that fish and other wildlife feed on. Bear feed on horsetail as a small part of their diet. It is toxic to livestock if consumed even as a moderate amount of their diet, especially to horses as it is high in salicylic acid.

Uses

Horsetail is an excellent astringent for the genitourinary system; its high silica content reduces hemorrhage and heals wounds. Silica depletion can weaken the bladder lining, causing irritation and inflammation of the connective tissue. Horsetail acts as a urinary tract astringent and diuretic, toning the organs of the urinary tract and soothing the bladder. Its flavonoids are antiseptic and help fight urinary tract infections as well as pain from UTI spasms.

Although it's a mild diuretic, its toning, tightening and astringent actions make it invaluable for treating incontinence in dogs. It is also considered a "specific" with inflammation or benign enlargement of the prostate gland and is often combined with hydrangea or saw palmetto in treating prostate issues.

Horsetail is a natural source of organic silica that is useful when there is an inability to absorb or retain silica in the body. Visible signs of this are weaknesses in the musculoskeletal structure, thinning hair, weak nails that crack or break easily, and lack of confidence; dogs may also pick at themselves constantly. Internal signs may be weak mucous membranes, intolerance to new substances (causing allergic reactions), or a dog who is allergic to many substances.

When combined with alfalfa herb, the synergistic duo helps to rebuild cartilage in the joints, often resulting in noticeable improvement in a mild or newly diagnosed arthritic dog; it may help to prevent silica loss at a younger age. Solomon's seal can also be added for deeper musculoskeletal issues. The powdered form is best for this use, blended together and added to food at 1 tsp per 50 lbs of bodyweight daily.

Horsetail is used in veterinary herbal eye formulas for conjunctivitis and inflammation of the lachrymal ducts.

The astringent properties of horsetail can be used externally to heal wounds, and as an eyewash. It can be used as first aid if needed while hiking with your pup to stop bleeding, prevent infection in a cut and soothe pain and inflammation.

Horsetail grows in early summer and should be harvested while still in a tight tree-like state; once opened to a wide branch, the medicine will be negated as the silica value is depleted and the plant is dry. It grows six inches and higher, usually topping out at about 18 inches.

To harvest, cut the stems fairly close to the ground with scissors; tie a bundle of three to six stems, depending on the size, and hang upside down to dry. Once dry you can use it to make decoctions and teas or grind up for use in your pup's food. It can also be prepared using fresh plant material in a tincture or extract at a dose of 1 drop per lb of bodyweight. 



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