

Herbs and Whole Foods Repairing the Horse



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This publication is produced as an educational piece to assist the horse owner and those seeking to expand their knowledge. The information contained within is not intended to take the place of a proper veterinary examination, diagnosis, and treatment.

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"Let your medicine be your food and your food be your medicine."

-Hippocrates

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Introduction

If you purchased this book “*Herbs & Whole Foods; Repairing the Horse*”, you are likely seeking not just information but health solutions for your horse. While this course is set up to introduce you to these topics in order to benefit your horse, the concepts provided also apply to yourself, or even your companion pet as we are more alike than we like to give credit. The philosophies and approaches are the same, regardless of the species.

The purpose of this introductory book is to do just that, introduce you, as a horse owner to the world of whole-foods and herbs, from an alternative medicine perspective. You will likely not find pure information on nutritional value of specific foods or herbs, as this is not the purpose. This information is readily available through many ‘free’ online sources, including www.nutritiondata.self.com.

For many of you, prior nutrition courses have been taken with knowledge gained on specific macro and micro-nutrients, so again, this will not be a focus in this introductory course.

Instead, what I hope to do is introduce you to the use of whole-foods as ‘food-therapy’, as a source of medicine, to help the ailing body, whether if that is a horse or otherwise. In most of these instances, where food is used as a therapy, the focus is not on the nutrient base of that food or how much protein or balance of amino acids is provided. Instead, it is focused on the energy of that food or herb, and the ‘actions’ that have been noted throughout the centuries, as to how that food interacts with the body and thus, can either create benefit or harm. The foods and herbs chosen and utilized in each horse will be based on patterns present within the patient, targeting the pattern, rather than just supplying what is perceived as ‘nutrition’.

My goal is to relay to you, the horse owner, how I see things and how I approach cases in the equine field regarding the usage of foods and herbs. While I am trained and certified in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Holistic Nutrition, I tend to not to use big terms which create confusion. While I may see things on a complex level in my own mind and eyes, I hope to simplify the concepts, which

makes it easier for owners to understand and apply. If you, as the owner can understand, then our chances of success are much higher as you can apply the concepts.

When it comes to nutrition, many of you may be coming to this book with pre-conceived ideas ingrained into you by others or through nutrition courses. Much of this information is based on the concepts of macro- and micro-nutrients, their importance and proper balance in their intake. Now, while this is important, it is not my focus. What I focus on is '*food therapy*', which includes the targeted and specific usage of herbs. The therapies chosen are based on patterns present within the horse. While I do not specifically look at nutritional value of each chosen food or herb, the nutrition often comes secondarily through our choices, creating benefit for the patient without often much thought.

For many horse owners, there is a heavy reliance upon feed balancers or synthetic, isolated vitamin-mineral supplements. Throughout time, these supplements were meant to do just that, 'supplement' the diet and fill in gaps. For many this may hold true, but for others they are used as a crutch instead of using proper forage, grains or otherwise. **Proper nutrition should be first and foremost obtained through whole food choices.** Then, and only then, should these ration balancers be used in my opinion. When one relies on these ration balancers and vitamin-mineral blends too much, the main source of nutrition becomes a synthetic or isolated form, and more importantly, one is missing out on the 'other' benefits of real, whole-food.

Proper nutrition is paramount for the horse, but I have always had a hard time with the concept of 'nutrient' balance, as this is not possible when utilizing whole foods for the purposes that I attempt to achieve. I focus on the needs of that horse, based on clinical issues that may or may not be perceptible to the average person, and patterns that are present. These imbalances may or may not be related to clinical deficiencies of nutrients, but usually are resolved as a by-product of proper food and herb usage in that horse, targeting specific pathways.

Our bottom-line goal is the same, and that goal is to help your horse. Whether if that is a health or lameness condition, the goal is to remedy and improve the situation. For many, they attempt to 'balance' the diet, often using feed balancers or vitamin-mineral supplements, going based on NRC guidelines or

those given to them by others. Some horses do respond, as there was evidently a deficiency present and they are helped. But, for a vast majority of other horses, they simply do not benefit from this approach, which leaves us wondering if there isn't something else going on in that horse. I want you to walk away from this book not seeing a forage such as alfalfa as just being an expensive protein source, but instead seeing it as a powerful blood tonic, full of nutrients, while having a cooling effect on the body and capable of helping to balance hormones and inflammation.

Much of what I present in this book is based on alternative medicine, which to many is easily dismissed due to the fact of perceived lack of scientific data. While many of the theories are hard pressed when it comes to research data, the application of the foods and herbs do have research data to support their usage. The difference here is that in an alternative application, a food or herb may be utilized to *'move blood'*, *'support Qi or energy'*, or *'tonify Yin'*, while the research data supports items of measurement, including energy (ATP) production, impact on the immune response or ability to down regulate inflammation. When applicable, I will convey more recent research to support the herb usage, whether if it is related to alternative applications or not.

The fact of the matter is that whether if there is research data or not, it does not mean acceptance by any person or group of people. Even though a plant-based diet has shown tremendous health benefits and reduction of disease in research, it does not mean it is accepted by every doctor, nor prescribed to patients. Many just ignore research data, and that is okay. Others want more specific data as they believe it does not pertain to them, their horse, or their situation when indeed it does. Either way, research may or may not be available for certain foods or herbs. Despite this, they are still effective when properly applied, as they have been used for centuries for the purpose of promoting health. In most instances, the research that we seek has already been done, over and over. It may be done in rodents or in children, but the results are still valid and likely applicable to all species when thought out. **All we need to do is apply it.**

Chapter One

Foods and Herbs in the Horse

What is a food? What is an herb?

A **food** is defined as any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink, or that plants absorb to maintain life and growth.

An **herb** is any plant with leaves, seeds, flowers, or roots that is used for flavoring, food, medicine, or perfume.

In looking at this definition it is evident that most herbs can also be included as foods and in considering this, 'Foods' become our main area of definition and focus.

Foods, *including herbs*, contain macro- and micro-nutrients that help to sustain life and growth. The macro nutrients include *fats, proteins, and carbohydrates*. Micronutrients are numerous and include multiple vitamins and minerals. No one food contains the proper balance of all macro- or micro-nutrients, thus it is imperative to consume a proper assortment or variety of foods to maximize the proper intake of those nutrients. In addition, despite much effort to balance diets in the horse and other species using 'balanced' vitamin-mineral supplements, Mother Nature is simply not balanced and from my perspective, the striving for a balanced diet is often not achievable. One can certainly provide a nice assortment of different foods and herbs to the horse, ensuring sources of all macro- and micronutrients, but usually, they will fall well short of perceived NRC recommendations, despite providing clinical benefits. This, generally, is not a problem and signifies that other factors are in play regarding health and the concept of 'foods'. It also may signal to us that the NRC levels may be

inappropriate when it comes to the use of whole food versus synthetic fortified products that are labeled as food.

When it comes to food and herb choices for the horse, there are numerous. In fact, for the most part, any whole food you place into your mouth, could be considered edible to the horse with a few exceptions. Many horse owners will make statements that horse's in the wild would not consume certain foods, such as blueberries, bananas, or even the purple sweet potato. While this is true, it does not mean we should not take advantage of the tremendous benefits of those foods. They were put here on our earth for a reason, to benefit health, and those benefits cross species lines.

A wild horse is likely under much less stress, on a physical and mental level, than the average pleasure or competition horse. Given this, their needs regarding these foods may not be high, but I would suspect that if given a choice, they would still readily consume them. Considering the high prevalence of health and lameness conditions in the horse, as a veterinarian, I would say not to hold back, but take advantage of these food groups to help encourage overall health and balance.

There are many courses online available for both human, equine, and likely companion animal nutrition, all of which strive for balance in nutrient provision and often focus on isolated, synthetic nutrients. *The purpose of this book and introductory section, is not to isolate those individual nutrients which are inherent to each food or herb, but to evaluate these substances from a different point of view.* If this point of view can be properly relayed to you, as the reader, hopefully, it will allow you to see not only the importance of proper foods and herbs in the diet, but understand how to apply them most effectively in your horse.

In general, as mentioned above, every food and herb contain within them both macro- and micronutrients. However, not every food offers the same variety or levels of those nutrients. Some foods are more focused on sources of macro-nutrients, such as protein, fats, or carbohydrates. While there are other foods that do contain those macronutrients, but harbor within them a tremendous supply of micronutrients. Thus, again as mentioned above, balance is best achieved by using a variety of foods and/or herbs.