

Have you heard of zoopharmacognosy?

Do you want to know more?



Zoopharmacognosy means zoo- animal/ pharma - medicine /cognosy -knowledge. It is the practice of animals knowing how to self medicate or self heal. It's within human capacity too, how often do you crave something? Or just love an aromatic for weeks then go off it?

There have been studies for more than 40 years into a wide range of animals using plants and minerals to self heal. First studied scientifically by Cindy Engels and published in her fascinating book *Wild Health*. This was taken further by Caroline Ingraham in her work over the past 30 years where she has observed animals and applied scientific biological and chemical knowledge to other animals. Her book *Animal Self Medication* is widely available. She also has a website.

I first became interested around 6 years ago after seeing Caroline Ingraham talk at a conference. I then booked sessions with a local practitioner for my anxious dog with an associated gastric issue. The results were remarkable. I have subsequently trained with Rachel Knott at My Animal Matters.

So how does a session go?

We always begin with an in depth case history. The practice is truly holistic taking in every part of the whole life of the animal. Science is showing that environments, events, genetics, nutrition needs, emotional needs behavioural need all impact health and wellness, both physical and emotional.

Once the needs are unpicked, a selection of aromatics (essential oils and hydrosols) herbs, minerals and powders are selected by the

practitioner to potentially meet those needs. The practitioner will plan a session to consider emotional, pain, gastric, and behavioural support.

The botanicals are offered to the animal and they decide if this is what they need, they then dose themselves using distance for intensity, and time or how much they need. They are clear when they have had enough. They also choose how to work with the botanicals. Hydrosols are often ingested or requested topically, quite often on the groin close to the femoral artery or on the chest near the heart centre, it is common for Rose to be requested here. Essential oils are most usually inhaled, through one or both nostrils, using the amazing olfactory system to sort the chemicals needed and sending them to the right places.

For a great explanation have a look at Alexandra Horowitz
https://youtu.be/p7fXa2Occ_U.

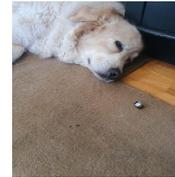
It is vital that the dog is able to independently make these choices, we never encourage engagement by “giving” the botanical. I would strongly advise not to generally use aromatics on or around a dog without checking with them and then monitoring. Once on fur or strongly in the atmosphere it is hard for them to move from the “dose” needed. It is important to know the properties of the botanical first.

It is a great idea to ask a Professionally Trained Botanical Practitioner to coach how to offer and what to look for. Sadly there have been serious health impacts on dogs when aromatics are misused. In our training we look at the physiology of using aromatics and their chemical constituents and any contraindications to look for. It is not a “this for that” practice just because it is natural.

Watching an animal make these choices is fascinating and a great lesson in micro observation of body language. A practitioner will

coach this in a session, identifying the unique cues that specific dog is using, as well as the generic ones we look for.

It is a privilege and humbling to be a part of that healing. I have been able to offer a beautiful boy some peace and support to let go of this life and enable his guardian to spend to quiet time with him before he passed, healing is not always a cure it can be offering peace emotionally and spiritually.



Working with Rescues with significant trauma has been a wonderful experience. Helping their guardian to begin to understand them. working together to understand how to communicate with them via the botanicals that can open them up to develop trust and begin to strip away layers of trauma which is causing them distress and behavioural difficulties. This has been so helpful with newly arrived overseas rescues.



Bernie was a young pup, separated from his mum in a car park after 3 day journey from Bosnia and adopted by a wonderful family. They called for a First Aid session just a few days after his arrival as he was so terrified and distressed. He eventually came and selected Violet Leaf for fear and trauma and Rose to help develop trust. The most wonderful moment was when he collected the pad we had offered on the floor and took to his guardian. The first time he had touched her, resting his chin on her hand. Subsequent sessions focussed on his fear of men, working with Training Protocols alongside Botanicals was very powerful. Rose remains a key botanical for him.

One of the focus for a session is to support physical issues linked to emotional trauma needs. When a guardian continues the coached practice, to work with physical and emotional/trauma healing, we

were able to see an amazing healing improvement in this dogs obsessively licked paws.



I love seeing anxious and hyper dogs like Yoki, who started off the session with suspicion, be really clear in selecting aromatics and powders to support calm. His guardian was stunned that he settled and ignored the outside distractions he would usually bark at.

Over the following few weeks, working with his guardian he gained confidence in novelty and found peace in being calm. His guardian reports their relationship has changed and they are now really bonded.



Once guardians feel confident in their role to support, the improvements are rapid. They can make those micro observations and offer an appropriate set of choices and see their dog feel better.

Sometimes this will lead to seeking further professional exploration. Frias guardian sought support as she had become reactive on a lead.



Observations of her behaviour in and out of the home within the History taking, highlighted a recent Spay which had become infected, hormonal imbalance, and some physical gait issues on lead. Vet checks were undertaken and x rays ruled out any damage. The Spay had seemed to heal but the scar was “proud”. We offered her botanicals for inflammation, skin scarring, emotional/hormonal balance, and discomfort. She selected strongly for all. This led to a recommendation to seek support for a bodywork specialist. It was agreed she had inflammation and it was linked to the harness and facia discomfort along with a deep muscle strain in the abdomen. Continued offering of botanicals alongside TTouch/massage and training support has reduced her reactivity greatly.

Zoopharmacognosy /Botanical Self Healing is not a diagnostic practice, that would require a vet assessment and if we feel an animal needs vet assistance we advise so, as with Fria above. Usually we will need a vet to have checked the needs first. This practice is complementary to vet work.

Sessions can work really well by zoom where guardians are coached through the process with their own supplied kit. All the studies above have been carried out virtually with a zoom session of around 2 hours and then follow ups using a range of media to share videos and ask questions.

If you would like to find out more or book a remote session please contact:

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