

- The primary alternative to conventional livestock healthcare treatments is not letting them get ill in the first place.
- A robust, well-developed immune system is the best defense against illness.
- Disease is dis-ease, the animal is not at ease with its environment.
- Allowing animals the freedom to act upon their natural instincts will go a long way to natural health.
- In the summer lots of pasture is the cheapest medicine and in winter lots of bedding is the cheapest medicine.
- Always.....fresh air, fresh food, fresh ground, and sunshine



Livestock should be outdoors whenever possible Indoor housing should be sunny & ventilated Forage should be plentiful

One of the greatest challenges as an organic livestock producer is finding remedies for common animal health issues that not only work under certification, but also actually work. Good herbal healthcare has a long learning curve and often little support from conventional farm vets. This puts the onus on the farmer to become educated about herbs and most importantly to actually put that education to work. It can be daunting to step out of the accepted norms of veterinary care and treat animals with “alternative” means. This can be even harder when the life of the animal is in danger.

Using herbs for livestock gives the farmer greater control, but also comes with greater responsibility. While we can readily grow or wild craft the herbs we need, we must also be careful to properly harvest, cure, and administer these herbs. Giving herbal remedies is not as simple as opening a pill bottle and following the directions. It requires a working knowledge of the common medicinal herbs and a keen familiarity with the health of individual animals. If a farmer is not intimately familiar with how their livestock normally looks and acts, they will not know when something has gone awry until it is too late.

Most herbs work best as cleansers or tonics and this is most useful in preventative care, building the animal’s health and immunity. This can be used to best advantage by providing livestock with a wide variety of herbs as forage in their daily feed. This can mean allowing grazing animals access to diverse pastures of grasses, legumes, broadleaf herbs, trees, and shrubs. Confined animals can also be offered “salads” of mixed herbs and other greens to choose from. Animals offered herbs to select from must, however, be well fed and never forced to consume plants out of hunger. Too much of a good thing can be very detrimental. This method of self-selection works well to promote and maintain the health of farm animals to prevent rather than cure illness. Curing illness with herbs is the next step in learning to manage livestock health naturally.



Grow herbs or forage crops for livestock Raise animals in small groups Move animals to new ground frequently

The following chart of herbs gives my experience in providing tonic forages for my livestock. Since I commonly offer my animals a wide variety of plants to sample, it is often unclear which herbs or combinations of herbs are actually doing the work. My goal is always to provide a diverse and palatable diet for both the physical and psychological well being of the animals in my care. The list is by no means exhaustive, but they are plants I have had experience with and they are all readily available.

Animal	Recommended Herbs	Herbs to Avoid	Animal	Recommended Herbs	Herbs to Avoid
Poultry	Chickweed Chili Peppers Clover Comfrey Dandelion Grass sod Lambs quarters Onions Pig Weed Plantain Purslane Spinach Sprouted Oats	Buckwheat Garlic (when laying eggs) Nightshades Vetch	Cattle	Alfalfa Ash shoots Elder shoots Garlic Kale Lambs quarters Mugwort Mustards Pig Weed Pine & Hemlock branches Plantain Sage Tansy Tarragon Wild Carrot or Fennel	Buttercup Cherry (wilted leaves) Dog Bane Garlic (lactating cows)
Hogs	Alfalfa Apple branches Ash shoots Burdock Calendula Comfrey Dandelion Elder shoots Golden Rod Goosefoot (Epazote) Grass Sod Milky Oat Tops (lactation) Mint Mugwort Pine & Hemlock branches Plantain Pumpkins Raspberry shoots Spinach (new mothers) Wild Carrot or Fennel Willow branches	Beet tops Kale Pig Weed (Amaranth) Potatoes Sorrel Wormwood			

GIVING HERBAL & HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES

Herbs

Herbs may be given to animals in several different forms depending on what best suits the herb, the ailment, and the condition of the animal and/or flock/herd. I have used the following herbal preparations and treatment methods on my own animals.

Dried Herbs, Roots, Seeds, and Fruits

- Grind or crush and mix directly with feed for whole flock/herd treatment.
- Steep in boiling water as a tea and mix with drinking water for whole flock/herd treatment.
- Crush herbs and form a small pill with water for treating individual animals.
- Mix herbs with hot water and apply externally with cotton bandages for a poultice.

Herbal Tinctures

- Dilute the appropriate number of drops in drinking water for whole flock/herd treatment.
- Place drops directly in mouth for individual animals.

Fresh Herbs, Fruits, Vegetables, or Forages

- Offer safe herbs free choice hanging in bunches or placed on top of feeders.
- For dangerous or strong herbs chop finely and mix thoroughly into moistened feed so no animal eats too much.
- Offer forages (no buckwheat for poultry) free choice in hay nets, on the litter, or hanging in bunches.
- Offer fruits and vegetables free choice in small amounts avoiding spoiled, moldy, or potentially poisonous items (raw potatoes).
- For strong, purgative vegetables (garlic, onions) chop finely and incorporate into moist feed after a brief (12-24 hours) fast.

Dusts and Powders

- Powders such as Diatomaceous Earth and Pyrethrum should be used sparingly alone. Remember your animals have to breathe them.
- Always wear a dust mask when using powders.
- For poultry dust baths mix DE with litter, sand, wood ashes, or soil to reduce irritation to the bird's lungs when dusting.

Homeopathy

There is a lot to be learned about homeopathy that I am not qualified to teach. However, I have used it successfully with all livestock and have a few recommendations.

- Keep your remedies isolated in a cabinet specifically for them. Don't store them on the veterinary shelf in the barn next to the iodine.
- 30C potency can effectively be used unless otherwise noted.
- Buy the very small pellets if you can find them, they dissolve better in water. Or use liquid remedies.
- For treating the whole flocks/herds dissolve 2-3 dozen pellets in their drinking water or in water that is used to moisten their feed.
- Dr. Surjit S. Makker (www.vethomopath.com) recommends 20ml of remedy mixed with 8 liters of water for 100 birds. This medicated water should be shaken well and put in drinkers accordingly.
- For individual birds/animals give them 2-3 pellets by mouth and keep them calm. It may also be given in the cloaca (vent) or vulva if it is moist.
- During homeopathic treatment keep the animals calm and reduce stress as much as possible. Expect a one-day drop in egg or milk production.
- Be willing to wait 24 hours to allow the remedy to work. If there is not marked improvement after that, try something else.
- The successful use of homeopathic remedies requires keen observation of your animals, a well developed immune system, excellent overall management practices, and a willingness to carefully research the correct remedy.

Organic Management of Hog Parasites (Most of these practices and remedies apply to other livestock as well)

Hog Parasites in General

- You probably won't have to worry about worms in hogs if you feed your pigs milk, raise only one or a few at a time and get them from a clean herd, leave your pen clean and empty for at least a couple of weeks between pig batches.
- Parasites are more of a problem in breeding stock, very young pigs, and animals kept over the winter.

Internal Parasites

- Most worms are transmitted via eggs from infected pigs dung.
- Some worm eggs such as strongyles can survive for months on pasture but usually die out on dry surfaces exposed to the sun.
- A good assessment of your ascarid levels is the quality of butcher hogs' livers.
- Low levels of worms like ascarids usually do little harm and may actually stimulate the development of a mild immunity.



Rubbing is a sign of external parasites. Wet, dirty conditions encourage parasites. Sows can easily infect their piglets.

Prevention

This says it all.....

I have given much thought to the inclusion of pigs in this book, but I have decided against it. Quite apart from religious beliefs inherent through my Turkish ancestry, where the pig is strictly prohibited as food for man, being considered as unclean and a potent source of disease to the human race, I know very surely that the animal will not easily respond to disease treatment by herbal methods. It is ill advised to proffer natural remedies for animals being reared habitually on an entirely unnatural diet, cooked foods being fatal to whole health, and breeding disease faster even than sour earth. The modern basic diet of the pig is boiled household swill from the refuse bins. It is prevented from feeding naturally by confinement and by the ringing of the nose. The animal is made by man internally filthy, and no herbal treatments are going to expel worms readily from intestines which are clogged with the mucus deposits resulting from unnatural diet, nor will herbs easily penetrate tissues clogged with fat and toxins from the same causes.....and when pigs are allowed to live a natural life, free range exercise and rooting for their food, there is no reason why herbal medicine should not keep them in excellent health or restore them when sick.

Juliette de Bairacli Levy, *The Complete Herbal Handbook for Farm and Stable*



Piglet health greatly improves outdoors.

Ranging sows stay fit & have healthy litters. All pigs should have access to wild herbs.

Internal Treatments

*Used successfully for hogs on Kingbird Farm

A=Allowed R=Restricted P=Prohibited OMRI Generic Materials List & NOP Rule

For the hogs:

- Feed mugwort, wormwood (use caution), or tarragon (Artemesia)* **A** (if Organic)
- Feed goosefoot or epazote seed (Chenapodium) **A** (if Organic)
- Feed raw garlic as sulfur prevents eggs from developing into larvae* **A** (if Organic)
- Feed conifers ad lib* **A** (if Organic)
- Offer herbs and vegetables such as carrots, pumpkins, tansy, raspberries, elder, and lupine* **A** (if Organic)
- Hydrogen peroxide in water **A**
- Diatomaceous earth (DE) up to 2% in feed **A**
- Homeopathic remedies (see below) **A**
- Deworm before season changes or before dry or cold periods* **A**
- Deworm during the new moon when worms are most active **A**
- Precede worming with a fasting period and follow with a laxative diet* **A**



Aromatic herb cuttings are good bedding.

Take wild plants and twigs to confined pigs.

Harvesting herbs for the sows.

External Treatments

For the hogs:

- Aromatic oils such as citrus, eucalyptus, citronella, lavender, rosemary ***R**
- Fly spray made of 1 cup vegetable oil, 2 cups vinegar, 1 cup water and 1 Tsp essential oil **R**
- Herbal dusts or rubs **A** (if Organic) **R** (if non-organic)
- DE applied to skin or barn surfaces **R**
- Neem oil* **R**
- Pyrethrum dust or fly spray **R** (parasiticides with piperonyl butoxide are **P**)
- Copper sulfate dust **R**
- Maintain mud wallows* **A**
- Keep a closed herd or bring in only select animals* **A**

For the land or buildings:

- Fly paper and fly traps* **A**
- Aromatic bedding such as cedar chips, herbs, and conifer needles* **A**
- Lime floors and other surfaces* **A** (ground limestone) **R** (hydrated lime)
- Compost manure and bedding to kill parasite eggs* **A**
- Intensive rotational grazing management to decrease exposure to parasites* **A**
- Multi-species grazing with poultry to remove parasite eggs from dung* **A**

- Reduce single species animal density* **A**
- Improve drainage of pastures and dry lots* **A**
- Plant mustards and marigolds to reduce roundworm populations **A**



Deep, composting bedding kills worm eggs. Rotate pastures & expose pigs to wild plants. Bright, comfortable housing improves health.

Homeopathy

- Homeopathic remedies do not actually act as vermicides.
- The theory behind homeopathic worming is based on the belief that these remedies, while not actually killing worms, will render the stomach and intestinal tract unsuitable for the establishment or development of worms.
- George Macleod recommends first to employ a conventional wormer and to follow this with remedies such as KAMALA, GRANATUM, CHENOPODIUM, and TEUCRIUM.

Ivermectin

This parasiticide is **Prohibited** for use in slaughter stock, but **Restricted** for use in breeding stock. It is allowed in emergency treatment for dairy and breeder stock when organic system plan-approved preventative management does not prevent infestation. In breeder stock, treatment cannot occur during the last third of gestation if the progeny will be sold as organic and must not be used during the lactation period of breeding stock

Karma's Louse Oil

- 3.8 L mineral oil (Restricted)
- 30 ml lemon essential oil (general EPA #8022-96-6)*
- 30 ml white camphor essential oil (general EPA #8022-96-6)
- 30 ml rosemary essential oil (EPA #8000-25-7)
- 30 ml lemon grass essential oil (EPA#8007-02-1)
- 30 ml eucalyptus essential oil (general EPA#8022-96-6)
- 15 ml citronella essential oil (EPA #8000-29-1)
- 15 ml lavender essential oil (EPA #8022-15-9)

*Use of essential oils is Restricted and must be EPA registered if used as a parasiticide.

Directions: Apply oil with squeeze bottle starting at the top of the head and running along the topline to the base of the tail. Apply and massage in extra oil to hot spots such as behind the ears, inside the ears, and under the flank. Do not get this oil in the eyes, nose, mouth, or other mucus membranes. Repeat at 14-21 days. I prefer mineral oil because pigs don't lick it off each other, it doesn't go rancid or freeze, and it smothers lice.

Recommended Resources:

De Bairacli Levy, Juliette. 1952. *The Complete Herbal Handbook for Farm and Stable*, Faber and Faber, London

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Managing for Herd Health in Alternative Swine Systems: A Guide, Practical Farmers of Iowa and Iowa State University Ext.

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Sheaffer, C. Edgar, VMD. 2003. *Homeopathy for the Herd*. Acres USA, Austin TX