

Homoeopathy is a gentle, holistic system of healing, a complementary therapy that strives to treat 'like with like', resting on the premise that whatever causes symptoms in a well person will cure them when they're sick. There are estimated to be more than 100,000 physicians practicing homeopathy worldwide, with an estimated 500 million people receiving treatment for all manner of illnesses, from IBS to eczema.

It has been used on humans for more than 200 years, and now pet owners, farmers, and vets have found that homoeopathic remedies are also effective for all types and sizes of animals. Within the farming community, positive trials include the prevention of anal prolapse in pigs, mastitis in cattle, journey recovery time and meat quality in cattle arriving at the slaughterhouse, scours in calves, fertility in dairy cows,

mastitis/metritis/agalactia syndrome in sows, piglet stillbirths and piglet weight gain.

Geoff Johnson is a homoeopathic vet practicing in Somerset, and a founder member of Homoeopathy at Wellie Level (HAWL), a non-profit making organisation that teaches farmers how to use homoeopathy effectively as part of their general management strategy.

Geoff believes that the success of the therapy in the treatment of animals lies in the fact that much of their illness can be traced to some form of stress. "I have treated species as diverse as tortoises, cats, dogs, cows, chickens and farm animals for the effects of grief or bullying," he says. "These stresses lead on to all the diseases we know, from eczema to infertility to cancer. The reason we know that these stresses are what caused the disease is because giving the appropriate remedy for that stress has cured the problem – even in serious cases."

Stress can be particularly prevalent in farm animals. "Think of the number of times that bought-in animals produce major illness a few days after they arrive," says Geoff. "It's not just coincidence. The loss of the familiar, the travelling, the change of environment, of food and of companions – it's all stress, and some animals are more affected than others."

Other stresses common to farm animals include weaning, the removal of the calf, mixing groups, bullying, transportation, overfeeding, vaccination, overcrowding, and the weather.

Homoeopathy works firstly by increasing the ability of the animal (or human) to deal with stress and hence avoid becoming ill. Secondly, it stimulates the often poorly functioning innate ability that animals (and humans) have to cure themselves once they become ill.

"This is different to and therefore



complementary to conventional medicine," says Geoff. "Homoeopathy deals with the beast, conventional medicine with the bug."

It is relatively easy to administer, either in pill or liquid form, individually or in the trough to treat a herd. And because homoeopathic medicines are administered in a highly diluted form, there are no residues passed on to the consumer or the environment. As a result, the therapy is widely supported by organic farmers, including the Prince of Wales who introduced it at the Duchy Home Farm many years ago. "Today, homoeopathy is one of our main methods of treatment," says David Wilson, farm manager. "We find it both actually and financially effective and the treatment is gentle on the animal."

But despite all the positive evidence, there is still considerable resistance within the veterinary world. Geoff is one of only 150 vets – that's about 1% of the vets in the country –

to have studied the therapy. He says that many of the criticisms are based on a lack of understanding. "The profession is mostly ignorant of its methodology or use," he says. "It is not taught at veterinary schools and is used much less frequently in animals than in people. Sadly, many vets discredit it despite having absolutely no knowledge of its use in practice."

To become a qualified homoeopathic practitioner takes three to four years (even for the already qualified doctor or vet) and treating many of the problems which beset modern farming requires considerable expertise.

Through its courses and literature, HAWL aims to empower the farmer by teaching him or her to understand the treatments. And while Geoff cautions against a casual approach to the therapy, he believes that with a small understanding of homoeopathic thought, farmers can improve the overall health of their animals and

often prevent the expensive problems.

"Homoeopathy is a powerful tool in the maintenance of health and treatment of disease," he summarises. "With increasing levels of disease on the farm over the years, despite intensive drug use, the farmer needs another tool to complement his conventional treatment and husbandry."

If you would like to find out more about homoeopathic treatment, you should talk to a qualified vet and get an idea of what the 'rules' are. To find your nearest practitioner, contact the British Association of Homoeopathic Veterinary Surgeons (BAHVS) via Chris Day, Alternative Veterinary Medicine Centre, Chingham House, Stanford in the Vale, Oxon SN7 8NQ. Telephone 01367 710324. Fax 01367 718243. Website: www.bahvs.com.

For more information on HAWL and its training courses, please visit www.hawl.co.uk.

Homoeopathy is seeing wide success in the treatment of farm animals for a range of diseases and stress-related illnesses. Geoff Johnson, a homoeopathic vet, explains why he is encouraging farmers to use it as part of a general management strategy.

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