

All creatures great and small

Like their owners pets of all types can suffer from anxieties which often respond well to homeopathic remedies, says *Francis Hunter*

At the beginning of the 80s, when there were no specific courses on homeopathy for veterinary surgeons, I attended the five modules of teaching at the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital to learn about medical homeopathy. I was fascinated to study from the perspective of the doctor rather than the vet. It was the mental or emotional symptoms that particularly interested me. In a lecture on this subject no less than 60 such symptoms or “states of mind” were outlined with the relevant remedies that might be useful to treat such problems.

These conditions ranged from absentmindedness, delusions or imagination, despair, through industrious and morose, offended easily or over sensitive, to tearful and taciturn. None of these examples and many others on the list could really be applied to animals. This does not necessarily mean that such states of mind do not exist in animals, but rather that we cannot identify or recognise them. It was only when

studying such subjective symptoms as these that I thought how rewarding it would be to be a doctor, rather than a vet, and be able to help so many people with the gentle and effective form of treatment which is homeopathy.

With animals it is necessary to study the more objective symptoms presented and to observe the animal really closely. It is also important, from careful questioning of the owner or keeper of the animal, to try to build up as complete a picture of an animal’s nature and temperament as is possible. In other words, as with treating humans with homeopathic remedies, it is taking the full case history that is so necessary.

So of the 60 human states about 15 can be recognised with some certainty in animals. These could be found in a Repertory under the following headings: anger/bad tempered; anxious/fears/easily frightened; cheerful/happy; desires company/dislikes being alone; refusal to eat; excited;

grief/sadness; hysteria/fits; indifference; jealous; moody/mood swings; obstinate/stubborn; resentment; restlessness/unable to settle; sensitive to noise, touch; suspicious.

Before discussing anxiety or any other particular state of mind we must consider the general nature of the group of animals concerned. The dog for instance is a pack animal and much of its behaviour is related to this fact. For a pack animal to be separated from the rest is loneliness indeed and may well cause slight or even extreme anxiety. A dog barks because it hears or senses something out of the ordinary, to summon the aid of the rest of the pack to help. A dog wants the security of the pack around it.

The rest of the pack, as far as a dog is concerned in a household of two for instance, is the owner who should also most importantly be the “pack” leader. A dog expects to be subservient to the pack leader and if such a lead is not forthcoming the dog adopts the position of leader and tries

to dominate the owner. Dogs are usually delighted to see their owners after they have been left for even a short spell of time, because it is the return of the pack leader and hence security. The reason the greeting is just as great after an absence of ten minutes or ten hours is probably because animals do not have the same conception of time passing as we do.

Cats on the other hand tend to be loners and behave differently. If you have been away you are quite likely to get the cold shoulder for a while, for having had the audacity to be absent and not attending to them when they demand it. Horses and cows are herd animals, where there is usually a "pecking order", but this is in no way as strong as the pack instinct.

So we come to anxiety itself. One definition of anxiety is: a state of uneasiness or tension caused by apprehension of something about to happen; worry, fear, danger. In acute cases this anxiety state may be manifested by physical symptoms such as shaking or trembling, or feelings in the pit of the stomach due to release of adrenaline. The adrenaline release initiates the basic instincts that can be seen to some extent in humans, but in a more evident form in animals: the "fight or flight" state of affairs. In animals anxiety, worry, fear or pain are all ultimately resolved by one of these two factors.

It is important for example with dogs to try to define the cause of the anxiety or fear in a given situation. Suppose a dog is frightened of the noise and size of big vehicles and traffic generally. It is a mistake for the owner to

sympathise and pat the dog to try to allay its fears. That only reinforces the problem. What the dog requires is fearless leadership from the head of the pack (the owner) who should walk along briskly, pulling the animal a little if necessary, to reassure it that the pack leader is not afraid.

The remedies for treating anxiety or any of the other states mentioned above are exactly the same as those that might be used to treat people. This concept is often quite difficult for people to accept, but for the most part the remedies available to treat any

illness, disease or emotional state are equally suitable for any animal. Dosage is another problem that often arises. The fact is that with our homeopathic remedies we are dealing with infinitesimal amounts of "energy" and so the relevant size of the animal is not of concern. Indeed the dose is the same for a mouse or an elephant. What we often term as "exotic" pets or animals, such as fish, small mammals (gerbils, hamsters and the like), tortoises and terrapins, tiny birds (canaries and budgies) and even frogs and toads all respond equally



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well to homeopathic remedies and at just the same dose as for bigger species. Fish for instance are easily treated by dissolving the remedy in their water tank.

Remedies for anxiety and other emotional states

Rescue Remedy is the first remedy to consider for any state of anxiety. This is one of the Bach flower remedies and so I suppose is not strictly homeopathic, but they are usually considered under the same heading. Rescue Remedy is a combination of five of the flower remedies: cherry plum for anticipatory fear; star of Bethlehem for shock, or the after effects of it; Impatiens for agitation/impatience; rock rose for terror; and clematis for unconsciousness or that “detached” feeling that often accompanies trauma or shock. Several drops daily in the fresh drinking water for a few days at times of impending stress or anxiety can do a lot to allay simple fears and worries.

Arnica too is a good remedy not only for the effects of trauma or physical damage but it also has strong mental symptoms in its make-up. In my opinion every household in the land, even if they do not want to embrace the whole of homeopathy, should keep both Arnica and Rescue Remedy in the medicine cupboard. They would soon find a use for them and the considerable benefits also.

The following are some of the situations that may cause anxiety or fear in animals: being left alone, also loneliness - wanting company; the dark; thunder and loud noises such as gunfire, traffic and fireworks; enclosed spaces or even open places for

some animals; crowds - too many people or other animals; travel; atmosphere (usually owner related); and fits. In my work as a veterinary surgeon it often occurs to me, and I have suggested this on occasions to people who might accept it and not take offence, that owners might do well to take a few doses of the same remedy that has been prescribed for their animal!

Argent nit - silver nitrate - prepared by trituration of the solid in the first place.

Keynote: anxiety/agitation - a state of perpetual agitation or apprehension of what may be going to happen. Fear and nervousness especially towards other animals. Probably the most useful remedy to give before shows and events. For humans it is strongly recommended before going to the dentist or taking the driving test!
Suggested potency 6c or 30c.

Gelsemium - yellow jasmine - prepared from the outer layers of the fresh root.

Keynote: fear - “stage fright” or emotional excitement; abject fear, shaking with fright. Gelsemium lacks the tense agitation of Argent nit, but is more suited for real or perceived fear.
Suggested potency 30c.

Lycopodium - club moss - prepared from the spores or the whole plant.

Keynote: anxiety - extremely active and must be kept occupied (Collies for instance). Diffident - outwardly mild and apparently even-tempered but can “blow-up” with provocation.
Suggested potency - high. This remedy is most beneficial when it is used constitutionally and is best prescribed by a



homeopathic physician.

Aconite - monk's hood - wolf's bane - prepared from the whole plant, including the root, just as the plant begins to flower.

Keynote: Shock - for fear and agitation after an accident or trauma of some kind. Aconite has a very fast action, which does not last for long, so it may need repeating for a few doses as necessary.
Suggested potency 30c.

Arsenicum album - white arsenic - prepared from triturations.

Keynote: fright from fear of being left alone.
Suggested potency 30c.

Pulsatilla - the wind flower or meadow anemone - prepared from the whole fresh plant.

Keynote: the animal that is lonely if left on its own and especially a dog that barks all the time that it is left.
Suggested potency 200c given twice daily for 2-3 days and not repeated too often.

Kali phos - potassium phosphate - prepared from the solution.

Keynote: timid, easily frightened.
Suggested potency 6c.

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He is also the author of *People are Pets*, published by and available from the British Homeopathic Association.