CLINICAL RESEARCH

ELK VELVET ON

ARTHRITIC PETS

THE CLINICAL USE OF VELVET ANTLER IN ANIMALS

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The crippling pain and misery of arthritis affects millions of pets and their human owners each day in the United States. Treatment of this debilitating disease complex has been aimed at reducing the inflammation in affected joints, and controlling the associated pain. Most of the drugs currently in use can have serious side effects with long-term use and may actually be life threatening. Alternative methods of treating arthritis such as chiropractic manipulation, acupuncture and herbal remedies have not gained widespread support in western medicine and have little credibility among most practitioners.

Steroids such as methyl-prednisolone may often have dramatic effects in controlling inflammation and the accompanying pain, but often-serious side effects such as fluid retention, gastric bleeding, depressed immune system and endocrine suppression can result. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as phenylbutazone, ibuprofens, acetaminophen and aspirin have also been shown to have success in controlling some signs of arthritis, but with potentially life-threatening side effects. These drugs can cause bleeding, impaired liver function, impaired kidney function and gastric and intestinal ulceration. Often, the treatment is worse than the disease. A new popular arthritis drug in use today, Rimadyl, a drug originally under development as a

human arthritis drug, has been responsible for over 500 deaths in dogs. Often, veterinary practitioners have to make treatment choices based on what will cause the least amount of harm.

A review of literature related to the use of velvet antler products as an alternative to drugs provides compelling evidence to support the claim that compounds in velvet antler may be significantly more effective and longer-lasting than many conventional prescription and non-prescription drugs for relief of the symptoms of Osteoarthritis. The literature also suggests that velvet antler may provide additional benefits such as increased vitality, enhanced cardiovascular health, improved mental health and relief of some conditions associated with aging. Furthermore, as a natural dietary supplement, velvet antler does not produce drug-related side effects and is considered by many researchers to be safer for use than most conventional drugs.

Velvet antler is composed of a variety of different tissues, including cartilage, and is also rich in collagen, a crucial protein, and glycosaminoglycans. Glycosaminoglycans help form cartilage proteoglycans, which regulate water retention and cell differentiation. They also help proliferate chondrocytes in cartilaginous tissue.

Osteoarthritis is caused by the loss of cartilage in joints. In normal joints, cartilage serves as a buffer between bones. Usually the

body replenishes cartilage as it wears away, but when Osteoarthritis occurs, cartilage deteriorates faster than the body can replace it. Eventually, the bones begin to rub together, causing pain, swelling and loss of joint mobility.

Most treatments for Osteoarthritis attempt to reduce pain and maintain joint function, but these treatments do little to restore joint health. In fact, many prescription and over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs actually prevent the growth of collagen in joints, causing further cartilage degeneration. These drugs can also produce other serious side effects such as deterioration of the gastrointestinal tract lining, and liver and kidney damage. Researchers believe that the imbalance between cartilage erosion and regeneration in Osteoarthritis patients is caused by a lack of glycosaminoglycans. Glycosaminoglycans play a vital role in the structural integrity of cartilage. Several studies indicate that velvet antler can reduce or even eliminate symptoms associated with Osteoarthritis. Recent clinical tests suggest oral ingestion of glycosaminoglycan-peptide complex, or components such as chondroitin sulfate and glucosamine sulfate – both found in velvet antler – may help stimulate cartilage repair.

Velvet antler may have more effect in treating osteoarthritis in animals, especially older animals, because of the synergistic effects of the other components found in velvet antler. Animals on velvet antler

- Inadequate dosage. Since no established dosages were available for velvet antler use in animals, many early cases were grossly under dosed. An adequate maintenance dose appears to be about 10mg/lb. Many early non-responsive cases did respond to an increased dosage. Early horse failures can also be attributed to inadequate dosages.

- Maintaining treatment by pet owners after starting. A problem faced by veterinarians after the pet goes home is assurance that the proper dosage and timing of treatment is carried out by the owner. Owners often forget to give the medication or they stop treatment after the animal shows signs of improvement.

- Non-responsive patients. Some animals, like some people, do not respond to certain treatment protocols.

CONCLUSIONS

Velvet antler is a successful treatment for the control of the pain and discomfort associated with Osteoarthritis in animals. It accelerates post surgical wound healing and fracture repair in both large and small animals. It improves the quality of life and well-being in geriatric patients, and is well accepted as a natural, alternative remedy by clients. Velvet antler has a definite place in veterinary medicine and should gain more acceptance by the profession as the benefits become more widely known.