

Homoeopathy in the Common Hedgehog

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Working at the Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare, I am often called upon to treat ailing hedgehogs homoeopathically.

A much loved creature in British gardens, it is unique in having an integument protected by spines. Aristotle was perhaps the first to observe that each spine consists of a modified hair. The hedgehog is found throughout mainland Britain, though it is scarce or absent in areas of mountain, moorland or marsh. It is very abundant in farmland and hedgerows, and it is one of the few mammals that seem to thrive in urban habitats, such as parks and gardens.

Hedgehogs are deceptively quick, running faster than a man can walk. If pushed they will also swim quite ably. Only really active at night, their social behaviour is difficult to observe. A long held belief that hedgehogs suckle milk from dairy cattle, is without factual basis, but is an enchanting idea. Alas, the hedgehog is very vulnerable to motor cars on our busy roads. Youngsters are also open to attack by larger mammals.

Hedgehogs present with a multitude of complaints, and are challenging homoeopathically. The risk of zoonoses is always considered, as leptospirosis and salmonellosis are occasionally seen. If in doubt of risk involved, we do not consider it wise to nurse a sick hedgehog.

In addition, the initial assessment of a hedgehog is vital as it is unrealistic to treat some individuals. Rehabilitation is sometimes unwise on welfare grounds.

Homoeopathic medicines are administered by 'in food techniques' or preferably injection. It is exceedingly difficult to medicate hedgehogs orally. I prefer to use lower potencies such as 6c or 30c.

Road traffic accidents are treated predictably with *Aconite* and *Arnica*. Associated wounds are bathed locally with *Calendula* and *Hypericum*. *Staphysagria* is a good back up in intractable cases.

Fractures are very common, and are repairable in some cases. Initial *Arnica* for bruising and haemorrhage, is followed by *Symphytum* for the healing fracture site. *Silicea* and *Calc. phos* also help bone metabolism.

Abcesses seem to resolve well in hedgehogs, with drainage where possible, and remedies such as *Hepar sulph*, *Myristica*, *Arsen alb*, *Silicea*. Dental abcesses are susceptible to *Merc. sol*. *Apis* is also a possibility where there is much redness and swelling.

Hedgehogs harbour a highly host specific flea known as *Archaeopsylla erinacei*, as many as 600 residing on one individual. There is rarely any deleterious effect from these fleas, anaemia being very rare. Unfortunately inexperienced individuals spray hedgehogs with a powerful organophosphate insecticide, and produce organophosphate toxicosis.

Hedgehogs also harbour shiny grey ticks, usually *Ixodes hexagonus*. As many as fifty of these parasites may be counted on one host. However they do not remain for long, and drop off after feeding on their host's



blood. Occasionally this parasitism can induce anaemia. Here we have found *Acetic acid* and *Arnica* especially helpful. Where the animal is malnourished *Ferrum met.* and *Calc. phos.* have helped.

Ringworm (*Trichophyton frerinacei*) infects 20% of hedgehogs. This dermatophyte does not fluoresce under ultra violet light, and hence diagnosis is confirmed with fungal culture techniques. A zoonosis (Ringworm) has to be treated with great caution. Complementary to griseofulvin treatment for a minimum of 6 weeks, we use a *Trichophyton nosode* once weekly in the 30c potency. The affected areas are thoroughly cleaned and treated daily with *Hypercal* lotion diluted 1/10.

Hedgehogs commonly harbour lungworm (Small nematodes). In severe cases the host animals show a dyspnoea and a congested cough. In Europe the consequent pathological changes are a serious cause of hedgehog mortality. Ivermectin is used to clear the parasitism, in conjunction with *Byronia* where the animal resents movement. *Drosera* is of use in chronic forms where there is deep and protracted coughing. Where oedematous changes are evident, *Apis mellifica* can give relief.

Many hedgehogs are susceptible to slug-pellet poisoning, as these are still used freely in British gardens. Clinical signs include convulsions, vomiting, diarrhoea, hyperthermia. Activated charcoal is used to assist detoxification. A variety of homoeopathic remedies such as *Aconite*, *Agaricus*, *Stramonium* have been of use.

Examination of hedgehog mouths often reveals periodontal disease and tartar. *Mercury* compounds and *Fragaria* are often used here.

Conjunctivitis does occur, and responds well to bathing with *Hypercal* lotion. Often rhinitis is associated here and *Pulsatilla* and *Calc. carb.* are useful.



General Secretary, Enid Segall and Chairman, Merwyn Madge photographed at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Reception to celebrate 150th Anniversary of their Royal Charter.