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VOLUME 14 ISSUE 4

August/September 2019



CLAY POULTICES

have many uses for horses

By Diana Wanamaker

Clay poultices are used to target a variety of equine ailments. Learn how these therapeutic fusions can be customized with natural ingredients to address your horse's needs.

The use of clay for healing dates back to 60 BC, when the Romans used it for intestinal issues. Years later, a famous Greek physician named Galen was the first to use clay for sick and injured animals. Today, clay is often used as an ingredient in poultices, which can be created at home or in the barn for the benefit of your equine companions. Making your own clay poultices ensures ingredient quality and allows you to customize the blend specifically for your horse. This article outlines a few benefits of clay poultices (see sidebar on page 63) along with steps to make your own!

HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN CLAY POULTICE

1 Buy the ingredients

The first and most important thing to note is that not all clays are 100% pure. When sourcing ingredients for your poultice, be sure to find a clay that's not adulterated (many brands contain lead and other harmful substances), and that offers third party lab testing results. Do your research to find a quality supplier.

Calcium bentonite clay is a popular choice for poultices. You can find it in powder form online or in most health food stores. To make your poultice,

you'll also need spring, distilled or filtered tap water. Pure high quality essential oils can also be added depending on the ailment you're treating, as well as Manuka honey, which boasts antibacterial properties. Witch hazel, tea (instead of water), colloidal silver, apple cider vinegar and carrier oils also make good additions to your blend.

2 Create your blend

After you've carefully selected each ingredient, it's time to mix your poultice. Combine half a cup of clay with a cup of cold water, and choose any additional ingredient(s) specific to the health issue you are addressing.

Do not mix your poultice in a metal container or with metal utensils. Metal reacts with the clay, reducing its effectiveness. Make as much as you need, keeping in mind that perishable ingredients have a shorter shelf life. Store in an airtight glass container in a dry cool place.

3 Apply to your horse

Apply the poultice to your horse using positive intention. Each custom blend offers a unique healing energy and experience for him — and for you! Use a wooden spoon, tongue depressor

or non-metal utensil to apply the clay liberally to the site, and leave it to set. When the clay becomes dry and flaky, it's time to reapply it.

Keep in mind that you *do not* want to place a contaminated dispenser (or fingers) back into your poultice if you are dealing with wounds and/or infection. Use one end of the utensil, then the other, and then dispose of it. Wear rubber gloves when applying.

COMMON USES FOR CLAY POULTICES

Below are some of the most common ways you can use clay poultices on your equine companion. Just remember that the first step in addressing any ailment or injury should be to contact your vet. Ask him or her if a clay poultice might help supplement the care your horse is receiving, and if there are any specific ingredients you should add to the clay/water mix.

Chronic flare-ups and inflammation

Apply (in order) poultice, cotton wrap, saran wrap or damp paper bag, no-bow wrap and a bandage. Apply on and off until the inflammation disappears, then continue applying just the clay poultice until healed.

Injury prevention

Cold poultices can be used on your horse's legs prior to and following exercise to assist in preventing injury. A cold wrap can help prevent inflammation, increase blood flow and help with stiff joints.

Infection

Do not place clay over an infected wound, or any wound that is draining. Place a gauze pad that is larger than the wound over the infection, and hold it in place by applying clay to the edges. Follow with a sweat wrap to pull out the infection. When the infection has dissipated and inflammation is gone,

you can cover the wound with the poultice. This also prevents flies from agitating the wound.

Adding colloidal silver, Manuka honey, activated black charcoal and/or an essential oil will offer extra support for infections, and can also help prevent proud flesh.

Bug bites and stings

Cover the bite and surrounding area with your poultice. For tick bites, start by dropping peppermint or Palo Santo essential oil directly on the tick to remove it. It should release within 30 seconds. Place a charcoal clay poultice over the tick site to draw out any poisons.

Skin conditions

Clay poultices can help speed the healing of mud fever, rain rot, allergies, rashes, hives and other common skin conditions. Add chamomile tea, herbal tinctures and infused water to your poultice to create a customized remedy. Apple cider vinegar balances pH levels and is a top choice for skin conditions, while honey offers an antibacterial remedy and softens scabs.

Hoof conditions

Epsom salts, apple cider vinegar, flaxseed, castor oil, sugar (organic) and plantain leaves can be added to a clay poultice to aid in the healing of thrush, hoof abscesses, white line disease, puncture wounds and other hoof ailments. All ingredients should be natural in order to prevent infection.

Internal usage

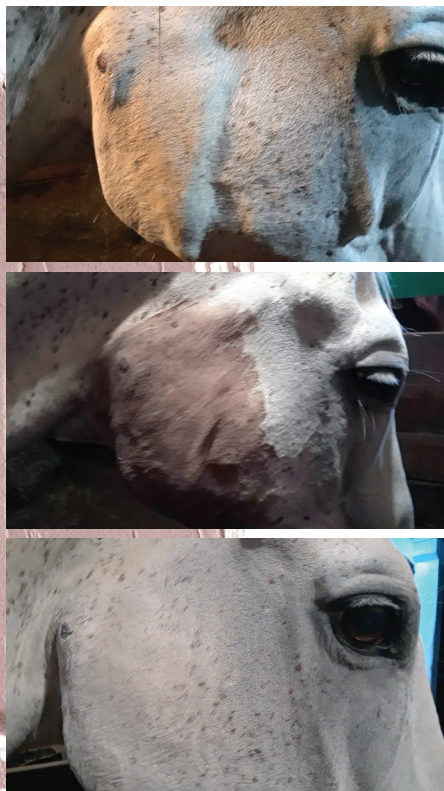
In the wild, many animals eat soil and clay to help remove toxic elements from their systems. Because clay has absorbent properties, it draws toxins, chemicals, heavy metals, poisons and parasites toward it. Offering

clay to your horse in edible form is detoxifying and can help prevent illness. It can also be used to help get rid of internal parasites and ulcers. Of course, speak with your vet before feeding anything new to your horse.

Benefits of clay poultices

Clay poultices have a wide variety of uses and benefits for both people and horses. They have been shown to:

- *Rejuvenate and cleanse the skin*
- *Reduce inflammation, irritation, itching, swelling and hot spots*
- *Detoxify*
- *Pull metal toxins, impurities and chemicals out of the body*
- *Improve cellular respiration*
- *Reduce free radical damage*
- *Relieve itching*
- *Help destroy unhealthy cells and activate the rebuilding of healthy cells*
- *Have a cooling or warming effect*
- *Increase circulation and oxygen to the area of need*
- *Alkalize the body*
- *Boast antibacterial and antifungal properties*
- *Assist in the relaxation of muscles and tendons, reduce tension, and increase flexibility for injury prevention.*



(From top to bottom) Bug bite reaction. Inflammation and fluid on side of jaw.

Lavender essential oil and bentonite clay poultice applied to entire area. The site was cleaned with saline solution before applying the poultice, and homeopathic Apis was given on the first day.

Three days later, the inflammation is gone. There is still some fluid near the site of the bug bite and at the bottom of the jaw. At this point, the poultice should be applied for another day or two to clear up remaining fluid, along with a daily cleaning using saline solution. A lavender essential oil and water spray could also be applied to support the healing process.

Diana Wanamaker is a writer, natural health educator and consultant with a special interest in CBD and essential oils. Also an Animal Communicator, she has been offering a deeper connection between pets and their people for over 13 years. She has spent the past two decades studying and utilizing a variety of alternative remedies, as well as providing guidance and natural health solutions that have helped many people save on vet bills and restore their animals to optimum health.