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RABBIT MEDICINE: A BASIC APPROACH TO VETERINARY CARE
COMMON SMALL MAMMAL EMERGENCIES
LIGHT THERAPY
HOLISTIC TREATMENT OF WILDLIFE AND RESCUE ANIMALS
HOLISTIC TREATMENT OF WILDLIFE AND RESCUE ANIMALS

Treating wildlife and rescue animals in most ways is just like treating our patients in regular practice, but there are some things to consider that make wildlife more challenging. Mostly we are dealing with animals that are not used to human contact. Their anxiety compounds what is already ailing them, often making diagnosis and recovery difficult. In these instances several types of holistic treatments can be helpful. There are many modalities available, we will touch on just a few.

**Bach flower essences** are tinctures derived from the flowers of different plants that have been found to be beneficial in healing different “states of the body”. A combination of essences called “Rescue Remedy”, containing Star of Bethlehem, Rock Rose, Impatiens, Cherry Plum and Clematis can be used on initial intake of a patient showing signs of fear, trauma or shock. Drops can be added to water and syringed or placed directly in the mouth of the patient every ten to fifteen minutes as needed until signs abate. Rescue remedy ointment can be applied to wounds or burns to expedite healing and pain relief.

**Homeopathy** is very helpful in aiding not only the physical problems such as bruising, hemorrhage or fractures, but also the emotional problems seen in our patients. Many experience fear, restlessness, panic or grief, which decrease appetite and healing as well as encourage self-trauma. In homeopathy we need to use all presenting symptoms to find the best remedy for the patient. If you have three symptoms that match you are more likely to have success, but often you will only have have one or two. Experience will help you with your choices. Give only one remedy at a time, give at least one hour to one day before trying something else.

- **Aconite**: sudden violent, painful symptoms; anxiety, tremendous fear and restlessness, terror stricken; bright red hemorrhage; sudden collapse; pneumonia

- **Arnica montana**: trauma; shock; fear of touch or approach, easily frightened; very sore, painful, bruised

- **Arsenicum album**: agonizing fear, anguish, weakness out of proportion with disease, sudden great weakness without reason; restlessness, self trauma, increased irritability; hemorrhage
black; putrid/cadaveric odor; sepsis; intense thirst – small amounts of water often; give after effects of toxins

Carbo vegetabilis: weak, sick, exhausted, cold, blue; anxious, easily frightened and startled; air hunger, gasping for breath (almost dead)

Ignatia: deep emotional component; alert; oversensitive, nervous; grieving; deep sighs; fear of things coming close; tendency to start; spasms; hungry but cannot eat

Natrium muriaticum: anxiety, apprehension, thin, thirsty – drinks large amounts of water at one time, emaciated; easily exhausted, awkward; after head injury, hungry but thin, falling out of hair, lingering fears

Nux vomica: (think of someone that has eaten and drunk too much the previous night) angry, impatient, fiery, nervous and excitable; cannot bear noise, light, odor, touch; willful, gastrointestinal problems – especially from overeating or eating inappropriate foods

Phosphorus: hemorrhage, inflammation and degeneration of mucous membranes, anxious or indifferent, gastrointestinal and respiratory problems

To help with bone healing:

Symphytum: in comminuted fractures, decreases pain and increases callus production; for periosteal pain after bruising is gone and wound has healed, follows well after Arnica

Ruta graveolens: fractures, especially dislocations; soreness and lameness as if bruised, sprained; given after Arnica it hastens curative process in joints; after Symphytum after injuries of the bones

Calcarea phosphorica: non-union fractures, slow calcification, works well with Ruta graveolens.
**Wounds and abscesses:**

Arnica montana: after trauma to soft tissue; sore, lame, bruised, painful;

Calendula: external wounds/ lacerations with or without loss of underlying tissue, decreases inflammation and stops bleeding, superficial burns, excessive pain

Hepar sulphur: inflammation ending in suppuration, every little wound suppurates, painful swellings or abscesses, oversensitive physically and mentally responding with irritation

Hypericum: nerve pain; pain after splinter or pricking especially in tips of fingers and toes

**Aromatherapy** is the use of essential oils distilled from various plants to promote healing. It is used in humans, dogs and horses, but should be avoided in cats, small mammals and birds. Essential oils can cause severe irritation of skin and mucous membranes, especially airways, if not applied in the proper dilution. For these reasons, I do not typically recommend their use in wildlife rehabilitation.

**Light therapy** can be used to enhance the healing capabilities of animals without needing to touch them. The simplest version is using colored cloth or plastic in front of a 25-40 Watt bulb or flashlight. The patient can receive whole body tonation or tonation of a specific body part, depending on the situation. For use in rehabilitation settings, exposure of the entire body is usually most realistic. Any light therapy treatments should last 30-60 minutes. Calming colors such as greens and blues can be left in the cage of the animal as blankets without special lighting if necessary. In general, Green calms the body, destroys microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi, thereby acting as an antiseptic. Green stimulates muscle and tissue repair. Magenta calms the mind and stabilizes circulation. Yellow stimulates the motor nervous system and lymphatics, encourages digestion and acts as an anthelmintic. Red stimulates the sensory nervous system, hemoglobin and platelet production and liver regeneration. Blue is cooling/sedating, decreasing inflammation, both internal and external. Blue can therefore be used as an antipyretic, as well as to decrease pruritus and inflammation of the skin.

Most importantly in the treatment of any animals is our positive energy and the gentle approach. All beings, but especially wild or injured and fearful animals feed off their surroundings. Being mindful to be calm and quiet when tending to these patients will
decrease their anxiety and encourage faster healing on their part. Make the cage an area of safety where the patient does not constantly feel exposed and learn about the habits of individual species to further increase their comfort level as they heal. And do not forget all you already know of veterinary medicine, for these are your real tools to success.