

SUPER IMMUNITY

The Herbs and Supplements that boost immune function and help prevent and heal infections.

by Angela Davison - the Horse Herbalist



The competition season is back in full swing, which means horses are travelling from place to place, staying in different yards or stables and often in close proximity to other horses and ponies.

All too frequently horses arrive home harbouring a bacterial, viral or parasitic infection. Initially they may not present with any symptoms - their vital signs are normal, they just seem a little flat.

This is the ideal time to administer immune-boosting and infection preventative herbs. The old rule of thumb is the quicker a 'disease' is treated the quicker it will leave the body, so don't wait until the infection takes hold!

Start giving the horse some herbal support as soon as it appears 'off colour'. If it isn't incubating an infection, the herbs given are only going to boost the immune system regardless - which can only benefit the horse.

ECHINACEA

The number one immune-boosting herb is *Echinacea angustifolia* root. It contains the most powerful properties in the Echinacea family.

For home use *Echinacea purpurea*, the whole plant (root and aerial parts) can be purchased from a health food store or a reputable commercial herb retailer who sells human grade herbs. Organically grown *Echinacea purpurea* grows very well in Australia so there is rarely a shortage of supply.

The pharmaceutical grade standardised potent herbal extract, used by practitioners, is immune-enhancing, immune-balancing, anti-inflammatory and depurative (cleans the blood and improves detoxification).

Think of Echinacea if a horse has an abscess, wounds, a venomous bite or sting, bronchial conditions, enlarged glands and even toothache, skin conditions, gut infections or Ross River virus.

If it is the real thing, a quality extract will make your tongue numb and you'll salivate briefly!

This herb is a must in any infective state and can be used safely in conjunction with antibiotics, if they are necessary.



Above: The *Echinacea angustifolia* root.

Below: The whole plant of the *Echinacea purpurea* can be used for home use.



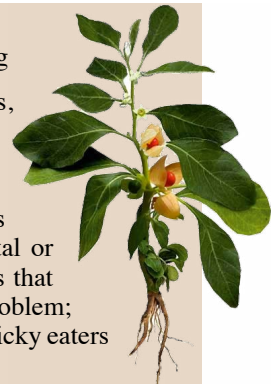
ASHWAGANDHA

 Indian Ginseng

Withania somnifera is another of my favourite herbs, often commonly known as Indian Ginseng, as well as Ashwagandha. It has immune-modulating properties - meaning it balances the immune system. It's also an adaptogenic (it increases the body's resistance or adaptation to physical, environmental or emotional stressors). Think of this herb for horses that just aren't thriving, yet the vet can't find any problem; horses that are poor doers for no apparent reason, picky eaters or ones suffering from post-viral syndrome.

The adaptogenic aspect really helps horses that are on the move, in different environments and situations, be it at competitions, races or clinics - it increases their resistance to stressors and increases their core strength.

Make sure to source a good quality *W. somnifera* as some varieties are very low in the required active principles.



KING OF BITTERS

Andrographis paniculata is indeed a bitter tonic. Bitters have a direct interaction with the gastrointestinal (gut) tissue. In addition to appetite and digestion they improve general health and immune function.

Think of this herb if a horse is either flat, has much flatulence (wind), loses its appetite, has diarrhoea or a chronic cough. Because *Andrographis* is energetically a *cold* herb it is preferable to take it with an energetically *warm* herb such as a fresh ginger root. They combine together very nicely.

Ensure the herb being used is *A. paniculata* as there can be adulteration with other species. **NB: Not advised to use in pregnancy.**

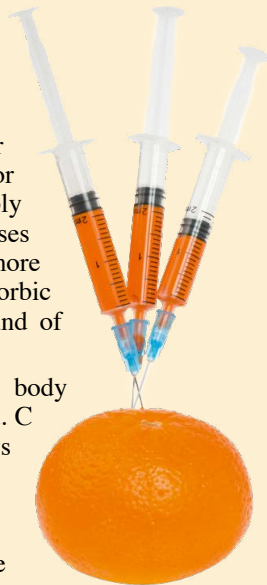


VITAMIN C

Horses make their own Vitamin C in the liver however, stress of any kind (accident or injury, travelling, sickness or other) quickly depletes the supply and the body needs more. Horses benefit from 4-6 teaspoons or more of sodium ascorbate or ascorbic acid daily if they have any kind of infection.

Any vaccination depletes the body of Vit. C so dose with extra Vit. C three days before and three days after any vaccination, to reduce negative effects. It's prudent to have a bottle of injectable Vit. C in the stable fridge so it can be injected into a muscle if the horse is *bitten by a snake*. This should keep the horse alive until the vet arrives.

Many believe the herb Rosehip has the same effect as Vit C as it contains ascorbic acid. Whilst Rosehips are a wonderful tonic herb and do help with mild Vit. C deficiency a horse requires the actual vitamin itself in times of need.



COLLOIDAL SILVER

There are many who swear by the benefits of Colloidal Silver for themselves and their animals to boost the immune system. I used it with both horses and humans in my early days of practice in conjunction with herbs and had good results. Then the supply company were no more, I couldn't find a supply that tested out with high therapeutic value so no longer used it!

Ask around for a good source as they aren't all the same. Your health practitioner or health store should be able to help you.

Good immune health starts with a balanced diet and health-giving exercise. Physical and emotional stress compromise the immune system, so it is important to give your horse healthy turnout, friendly equine companions, access to pasture or hay, and room and time to 'be a horse'.



About the Author: ANGELA DAVISON - THE HORSE HERBALIST

Angela has been in full-time practice as a Classical Herbalist for almost 30 years. She has dedicated that time to research, teaching, and pioneering

new methods to heal at the core level. She has accumulated a vast body of knowledge including over 10 thousand case histories.

Flower remedies have always been an integral part of all her treatments.

Angela is the author of 'Flower Remedies for Horses, Pets and People'.

Find out more at:

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