



American College of Veterinary Botanical Medicine

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Veterinary Botanical Medicine

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Question: Is Veterinary Botanical Medicine supported by a basis of scientific knowledge and practice that is acceptable to the profession?

We believe that our Petition appropriately states the current state of play of the science that underpins veterinary botanical medicine. We specifically excluded preclinical studies and phytochemical studies from the petition. The profession has responded to the first petition overall positively and we suggest that the submission of journal article examples; a review of published journal articles in mainstream veterinary journals pertaining to veterinary botanical medicines; as hundreds of abstracts, again in recognized veterinary journals- is a substantial basis for recognizing the potential of veterinary botanical medicine. The volume of publications is comparable with other Colleges forming in their infancy. We expect the volume to increase with support for the College's recognition and one of the reasons we advocate for the formation of this Specialty.

The ACVBM acknowledges the concerns regarding the scientific basis of veterinary botanical medicine. The comment has been made that the published scientific and clinical data supporting the overall safety and benefits of many plant medicines, could be dismissed as questionable - having methodological bias and thus being of inferior quality to trials conducted on conventional drugs. It is important to note that the journal articles and abstracts presented in the petition were derived from mainstream veterinary journals.

At the same time, we agree that published research needs to be critiqued. A quantitative assessment of the reporting of herbal medicine research outlined suggestions for improvements recognizing publication bias and incomplete reporting of outcomes (1). However, to be fair, this is also the case for clinical trials generally. In veterinary medicine for example - a review of 97 clinical trials uncovered a need for more high-quality studies (2). And more recently a cross sectional study of veterinary randomized controlled trials of pharmaceutical interventions funded by different sources suggested that findings may be affected by the source of the funding and that some RCT's provide a weak evidence base and targeted strategies are needed to improve the quality of veterinary RTCs to ensure there is reliable evidence on which to base clinical decisions (3). So this is an issue common to both herbal and veterinary research. However, to reiterate, the studies provided in the petition are from mainstream veterinary journals.

We do not believe we have over stated the science. We started by saying there are there are over 143,000 published journal articles on plant extracts of which there are over 7000 Systematic Reviews or reviews. Further, over the last 15 years there has been an increasing publication of research on plant extracts in animals, with more than 10,000 studies published from 2010 to 2014 alone. This demonstrates the emerging and substantial research being undertaken on plants in medicine. Animal models are an important source of information on toxicology, safety and phytochemistry. Veterinary Botanical Medicine draws on such resources to inform rational phytotherapy. However, we discussed in

some detail specific examples of research in various species and cited over 70 veterinary and allied journals that have published studies on botanical medicines in the petition.

We believe there is a strong and rational basis for veterinary botanical medicine as a distinct and scientifically based discipline. It is true that preclinical research doesn't always translate into a treatment benefit once evaluated in people or animals. But there are substantial studies now in people using double blinded RCT studies, with more than 3500 conducted to date. We agree there are too few in veterinary medicine comparatively, but just because that research isn't available, does not mean there isn't a rational basis nor scientific research that can be drawn upon for clinical decision making in supporting evidence-based medicine.

1. Naumann K1. A Quantitative Assessment of the Reporting Quality of Herbal Medicine Research: The Road to Improvement. *J Altern Complement Med.* 2017 Sep 15.

2. Brown DC1. Control of selection bias in parallel-group controlled clinical trials in dogs and cats: 97 trials (2000-2005). *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2006 Sep 15;229(6):990-3.

3. Wareham KJ1, Hyde RM1, Grindlay D2, Brennan ML1, Dean RS3. Sample size and number of outcome measures of veterinary randomized controlled trials of pharmaceutical interventions funded by different sources, a cross-sectional study. *BMC Vet Res.* 2017 Oct 4;13(1):295.