

Supplementing Your Cat

Nutraceuticals, supplements and herbs are the workhorses of many holistic courses of treatment.

By Lisa Hanks

The term “nutraceutical,” which is derived from “nutrition” and “pharmaceutical,” refers to extracts or purified forms of food, parts of foods, or foods themselves that are ingested to gain health benefits, including the prevention and treatment of diseases.

Nutraceuticals include essential fatty acids (omega-3 and omega-6), antioxidants (such as beta carotene), herbs (such as garlic and ginger) and supplements such as coenzyme Q10 and glucosamine. Many herbs and supplements fall under the nutraceutical wing. They’ve been used to treat everything from arthritis (glucosamine and chondroitin) to allergies (burdock).

Be careful when using herbs on your cat. “People often think because herbs are natural, they’re without potential side effects,” warns Erin Bannink, DVM, an IVAS-certified acupuncturist from Bloomfield Hills, Mich. “This is not true. Herbal therapies still carry the potential for toxicities, side effects and drug interactions.”

Plus, the quality and efficacy of herbs varies from manufacturer to manufacturer, and dosages for cats are not determined scientifically. Look for a National Animal Supplement Council seal of approval, which means the product has met strict quality guidelines and undergone regular testing. Also look for an easy-to-read label that shows a complete list of both inactive and active ingredients, dosage amounts, an expiration date and lot number, and company contact info.

Whenever you’re considering using supplements or herbs with your cat, work with an experienced holistic veterinarian to ensure the safest, most effective treatment.