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NUTRACEUTICALS

What are nutraceuticals?

The term 'nutraceutical' was coined to represent compounds found in food and herbs that are not technically considered nutrients such as vitamins or minerals, but which may have a profoundly beneficial impact on the health of the body. Common examples of nutraceuticals include the use of glucosamine in arthritic conditions of dogs and cats, and antioxidant compounds that help in the prevention of cancer.

Why recommend administration of nutraceuticals to my pet?

Nutraceuticals appear to be of benefit in both the treatment and prevention of disease. By using nutraceuticals, you may be able to reduce or eliminate the need for conventional medications, reducing the chances of any adverse effect. Nutraceuticals often possess unique chemical actions that are unavailable in pharmaceuticals. Examples include the ability of silymarin in Milk Thistle to protect liver cells from damage, and quercetin (found in a variety of plants) to stabilize certain cells of the immune system to avoid allergic reactions.



How much experience is there with the use of nutraceuticals in pets?

Various nutraceuticals have been in use in pets for several decades. Others are only just being introduced to veterinary medicine.

What species of animals are being treated regularly with nutraceuticals?

Nutraceuticals use is being explored by veterinarians in most species of animals, including reptiles, marine mammals and birds. Most veterinary clinical experience comes from their use in horses, cats, and dogs.

How much research has been conducted on nutraceuticals?

The type and quantity of research in the use of nutraceuticals varies with the compound under study. The total number of studies on nutraceuticals in medicine numbers in the tens of thousands. In some cases, these studies include clinical trials in both humans and animals.



How can my pet benefit from nutraceuticals?

Nutraceuticals have a broad spectrum of effects, including immune regulation; control or elimination of infection by bacteria, viruses and parasites; support of normal organ structure, function, or blood supply; and enhancement of normal metabolic processes.

How successful is nutraceutical therapy?

This varies with the disease and nutraceutical being used, but in general most pets respond well to nutraceutical therapy.

How safe are nutraceuticals?

Nutraceuticals are generally considered safe, but some supplements more than others. Most nutraceuticals are safer than conventional medications.

Where do I obtain nutraceuticals and do I need a prescription?

Your veterinarian may have preferred nutraceuticals that he or she will recommend. A prescription is not needed for most nutraceutical supplements. Quality of nutraceuticals may vary greatly from one manufacturer to another.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Steve Marsden, DVM ND MSOM LAc DiplCH AHG, Shawn Messonnier, DVM and Cheryl Yuill, DVM, MSc, CVH.
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