

## USE OF HERBAL MEDICATIONS AND ANTIOXIDANTS IN PERFORMANCE AND BREEDING DOGS

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The greyhound is a highly developed and unique racing animal, and when fit 2-4 lengths difference in speed by inadequate feeding, various stressors, or mild muscle damage. In many cases western medical treatments are inadequate. A few herbal medications will be discussed that the author commonly uses.

### Silybum marianum (St Mary's thistle or milk thistle)

This herb is used in all cases where increased plasma ALT activity is found. Increased ALT activity indicates acute hepatocellular damage. The magnitude of the increase in plasma ALT activity is directly proportional to the number of hepatocytes affected, but not to the severity or reversibility of the damage. Many trials have been conducted on milk thistle showing that it decreases aminotransferase activity and improves various clinical parameters. In my experience with racing greyhounds, levels of ALT are often found over the recommended limit (40-100), with the dogs showing loss of form, lethargy and dull coats. In the majority of cases, treatment with milk thistle restores the dog to normal within 3-6 weeks.

The possible causes of the liver damage are also discussed. These include diet (preservatives in meat, excess iron, excess fat or methionine etc.) to bacterial or viral infection, or other stressors e.g. overwork, psychological, etc.

### Saw Palmetto

Saw Palmetto has been reported to contain diuretic, urinary antiseptic, endocrinologic and anabolic properties.

In many greyhounds after hard work, muscle spasm at the neck of the bladder occurs., resulting in the male dog being unable to empty his bladder for 1-3 days. Use of this drug dramatically reduces the problem.

### Astragalus

This has been used in Chinese medicine for increasing endurance. It may improve renal function, enhance immunity, have a tonic effect on the heart and intestines, and have anti-viral and anti-inflammatory effects.

This herb is routinely added to the diet of the racing greyhound.

### Panax Ginseng

This herb has been traditionally used as a tonic for exhaustion, weakness, during convalescence, and for reproductive problems. This herb is recommended for greyhounds in hard work, and for stud animals.

### Chinese Rhubarb

This herb is used with Carthamus and used for acute and chronic renal failure.

Increases blood flow to the kidney, stimulates renewal of renal tissues.

Reduces the hypertrophic state of the kidney

120-500 mg/day

This combination is used in all cases where a greyhound is presented with poor form, and elevated BUN and creatinine, following a hard run.

### Anabolic Colostrum

used in very stressed, overworked, immune deficient greyhounds, with poor form and weight loss. Use 400mg twice a day for 14 days. Greyhounds will put on up to 4 kg and rapidly return to form.

### Horsetail

Horsetail is rich in silicic acid and silicates, providing about 2-3% of elemental silica. This is thought to exert connective tissue strengthening and anti-arthritis action. I use this routinely in pups with deviated wrists and joint soreness. Usually the effects are dramatic if given in the very early stages. 10g daily for 5-7 days orally.

### Antioxidants

Vitamins A, E and C, along with ZINC (the element) and SELENIUM are the main antioxidants used in greyhounds. If these are all present in the diet, there are generally no problems with cramping, a major problem with greyhound racing. These antioxidants are also very important in maintaining high fertility.