

Veterinary Newsletter 🛞 Summer 2013



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Sincerely,

John Katt Lorena Monda

John Scott, DOM and Lorena Monda, DOM

Treating Gastrointestinal Issues with Chinese Herbs

The middle warmer (middle *jiao*) incorporates key functions of the gastro-intestinal system: the spleen/stomach, pancreas, liver, and gall bladder. The middle warmer is responsible for the aquisition of post-natal qi from food. Every other system depends daily on the proper flow of qi and nutrients from the middle warmer for growth, defense, repair, movement, reproduction, respiration, and temperature regulation.

In order to gain the benefits of food and herbs, there needs to be enough functional integrity to transform food into nutrients. In Oriental Medicine, the spleen is responsible for transformation of food into usable nutrients with the help of mastication, hydrochloric acid, enzymes, and bacteria. Spleen qi is also responsible for transportation of nutrients, with the help of the down-bearing actions of the stomach qi through the small intestine and into the blood stream.

Gastrointestinal issues are most obvious at the beginning and the end of the system: vomiting, lack of or excessive appetite, bad breath, diarrhea, constipation, and flatulence are often VISIT US AT THESE CLASSES AND CONFERENCES

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what pet owners will notice. By using the chief complaint as a guide to pattern differentiation, you can begin to narrow down your herbal choices. If the pattern seems too complicated, consider starting with a harmonizing formula to mitigate the symptoms and create a clearer picture.

VOMITING

Vomiting is a sign of *rebellious qi*. Nausea, as seen in licking of the lips, frothing at the mouth, eating grass, etc., is often a milder version of this same pattern. If the animal has trouble keeping food and herbs down, acupuncture of Ren 22 and P6 can help. Grinding tablets or using powders or liquids can assist with absorption of herbs to quell vomiting.

Lack of Appetite

This can indicate *stomach* or *spleen qi* and/or *yang deficiency, cold, or damp* which can all benefit from the external use of moxa. Formulas like **Sea of Qi** or **Ginseng and Astragalus** will boost spleen qi/yang and assist in processing damp or phlegm.

Loss of appetite can also be due to *lingering external pathogens*. Heat clears quickly, but dampness lingers and blocks the desire to eat, and possibly the ability to smell. **San Ren Tang** (KPC *Continued on page 2*

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0230), Minor Bupleurum Formula and/or Fritillaria and Pinellia Formula can mobilize and clear damp and phlegm.

Lack of appetite can also be due to a *reverting yin pattern* where there is hot above and cold below, hunger without a desire to eat (nothing looks good), and sometimes accompanied by reversal qi flow where blood/qi/heat cannot reach the extremities because they are bound up in the middle. Harmonizing formulas help with this pattern. (See below.)

In a *stomach yin deficiency* pattern, lack of appetite is similar to reverting yin, but without the complicating heat distribution. Tongue will be slightly red and peeled in the stomach area, red and dry all over, or red and shiny. Stools are usually dry and constipated and there is thirst (maybe excessive) for cold liquid which, if there is heat of the stomach, may elicit vomiting of fluids. For this pattern, consider **Eight Immortals Formula** (with kidney, stomach and lung yin deficiency), **Jade Source Formula** (also support for polyuria and polydipsia side effects of prednisone), or **Sheng Mai Formula** (especially beneficial after prolonged weakness or shock).

Excessive Appetite

Stomach heat/fire is a common cause of excessive appetite. Stomach heat/fire can be a result of liver overacting on stomach, food/qi/blood stagnation brewing heat, or stomach yin unable to cool stomach yang. The difference between heat and fire is the intensity of the symptoms. Excessive appetite is accompanied by hunger soon after eating, halitosis, belching, constipation (if more heat than damp), or diarrhea (if more damp than heat). Appropriate formulas would be **Earth-Harmonizing Formula** (with liver stomach disharmony and heat), **Stomach-Harmonizing Formula** (with heat-toxin), or **Linking Formula** (liver invading stomach, liver yin deficiency, with no dampness). Add **San Qi Formula** in cases of stomach fire leading to bleeding of the stomach or gums.

What comes out, or doesn't come out, gives us a lot of information about on the function of the GI tract. Owners who clean litter boxes, pick up after their dogs on walks, or muck paddocks will usually be able to give accurate descriptions of their pets' bowel movements. It is very important, especially when using herbs, to have a good understanding of the functioning of this most distal end of the GI system. Owners may need to separate other animals for awhile or follow their pets around the yard, but the information that they provide is invaluable.

CONSTIPATION AND DIARRHEA

These can have many causes. Clearing excesses such as *damp*, *heat*, *cold*, and *toxin* needs to happen congruently with tonifying any *deficiencies*. Depending on the virility of the patient, the rate at which you do this will vary. If the animal is weak, tonification support may be needed while clearing is attempted. Blood and yin tonics can generate more damp while qi and yang tonics can generate more heat, if not properly supported.

Constipation excesses are *heat* and *food*, *qi*, *phlegm*, and/or *blood stagnation*. Excesses are guided out the "nearest exit" via the stool. There are many formulas to choose from, and the best

results will be achieved by matching the pattern of the whole patient, verses just resolving the constipation.

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Some formulas to clear excess are **Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula** or **Free and Easy Wanderer Plus** (see harmonizing formulas below), **Bupleurum D Formula** (liver qi stagnation with phlegm and heat), **Earth-Harmonizing Formula** (liver invading stomach, with food stagnation and heat), **Hawthorn and Fennel Formula** or **Poria Fifteen Formula** (food stagnation with obesity), **Resolve the Middle Formula** (damp and food stagnation), **Stasis-Transforming Formula** or **Tang Kuei and Salvia Formula** (blood stagnation; dark tarry stools, purple tongue). For dry, pebble-like stools that are difficult to pass, use **Persica and Cistanches Formula** followed by a blood or yin tonic.

There are, likewise, many formulas to tonify deficiencies which can be used simultaneously, after, or alternating with clearing formulas. Often heat (due to excess from stagnation or deficiency of fluids) will damage the blood, while dampness/ wind may indicate a blood deficiency that allowed damp/wind to move opportunistically into the vacated space. Appropriate blood tonics to prevent reoccurrence of constipation, are He Shou Wu Tablets (kidney/liver blood deficiencies), Tang Kuei and Peony Formula (blood deficiency with a tendency to dampness), Tang Kuei and Tribulus Formula (blood deficiency affecting the skin/coat), or Women's Precious Formula (blood and qi deficiency). Yin precedes blood on a continuum and a healthy spleen is needed to transform yin into blood. The spleen may need simultaneous support for digesting yin tonics. For yin deficiencies consider Eight Immortals Formula (kidney/stomach/lung yin deficiencies), Jade Source Formula (yin deficiency with heat with polyuria/polydipsia), or Rehmannia Six Formula (kidney yin deficiency).

For constipation due to "lazy colon," or weak peristalsis we need to consider the strength of the large intestine (related to the downbearing action of the stomach qi and the lung qi—the uppermost organ of the waterways), spleen (source of qi) and kidney (source of yang which becomes qi). Stools are usually wellformed or soft, but take straining to pass. The abdomen may be distended, but not painful. The tongue will be pale and swollen and may be wet, if yang deficient (look for heat-seeking signs as well). For *qi deficiencies*, consider **Astragalus Formula**, **Six Gentlemen Formula** (with more dampness) or **Sea of Qi Formula** (spleen/kidney qi and yang). Note that these are warming formulas and should not be used with heat presentations such as foul smelling, loose stools.

Diarrhea is best treated by determining what makes it better or worse, the time of day it occurs, and accompanying symptoms to help pinpoint an appropriate formula. It is important to be sure that you have the correct pattern when treating herbally.

If diarrhea is exacerbated by raw, cold foods (or antibiotics and cold medications), the animal has low energy, its stool contains mucus, or it occurs soon after eating, consider *spleen qi deficiency* (with or without dampness). If this progresses to *yang deficiency*, there will be undigested food and/or liquid-like stools, or

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urgent early morning diarrhea. (See qi/yang tonics under constipation.) Moxibustion is recommended for these cases as well.

Consider food stagnation with foul breath, belching, severe distention and discomfort relieved through diarrhea. In addition to the formulas mentioned above, consider Ease Digestion Formula (especially for food-sensitive patients avoiding gluten).

For acute explosive diarrhea with likely exposure to pathogens use Andrographis Formula, Wu Hua Formula, or Intestinal Fungus Formula. These are cold formulas, therefore their use should be monitored. As long as the damp-heat signs are present, it is appropriate to continue use. A protective formula maybe needed if the animal is lethargic during treatment or after using these formulas, to reestablish the spleen system.

Formulas for Harmonizing the Whole System

The Clinical Handbook of Internal Medicine (Maclean and Lyttleton, 2000) identifies "The Primary Pathological Triad (PPT)" that represents three mutually engendering patterns

which contribute to gastrointestinal disorders: liver qi stagnation, spleen/stomach qi deficiency, and

damp-heat. Modern lifestyles of owners and their pets continually contribute to PPT: stress (our stress outside the home can affect our pets when we get home), poor dietary choices, excessive use of pharmaceuticals, and sedentary lifestyles. With this com-

bination of pathologies "harmonizing" formulas are needed. These types of formulas offer a combination of up and down motion, warm and cold temperatures, and exterior-releasing/ interior-tonifying properties. Each pattern must be addressed at the same time or the pattern will only shift to a "complimentary" pattern in the triad and eventually relapse.

Often the complex is difficult to sort through in terms of which part of the triad is predominant. Harmonizing formulas like Minor Bupleurum Formula are a good choice to address all aspects of this triad and can clear the field so that a predominant pattern can emerge and be addressed.

Minor Bupleurum Formula is a leading formula in the shaoyang harmonizing category. Shaoyang syndromes reflect an imbalance between yin and yang, or interior and exterior. Chai hu (bupleuri radix) lifts and upbears the clear yang, and disperses qi stagnation and external pathogens, while huang qin (scutellariae radix) drains damp-heat, turbid yin, and internal pathogens downward to harmonize the exterior/interior. Ban xia (pinellia rhizoma) and sheng jiang (zingiberis rhizoma) both act to harmonize the stomach to relieve nausea and likewise balance the middle warmer. Da zao (jujubae fructus) is sweet and nourishing to the middle warmer while sheng jiang moves the qi and warms the middle warmer. Together they harmonize the constructive and defensive qi. Dang shen (codonopsis radix) prevents chai hu from depleting the qi through dispersion and chai hu prevents dang shen from retaining or tonifying pathogens in

the body. This formula often aids with the sequella of kennel cough (with or without vomiting) when phlegm is still an issue. This can also be used with cirrhosis, pancreatitis, cholecystitis, gastric ulcers, and more, as long as at least one shaoyang symptom is present.

Shu Gan Formula treats liver invading stomach, which can lead to nausea. Often there is an emotional component followed by stomach upset. Additional indications are: nausea in the mornings, with decreased appetite or eating drywall, grass, tissue etc., and a history of pancreatitis or gastric ulcers. It is similar to Pinellia and Magnolia Formula, but with more focus on moving qi stagnation and secondarily on resolving phlegm. Tongue is normal to purple/dusky, may have greasy or thick yellow coat; pulse is rapid and wiry.

Pinellia and Magnolia Formula is similar to Shu Gan Formula, but with more focus on resolving dampness and secondarily focused on moving qi stagnation. It reverses rebellious stomach qi

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and lung qi leading to nausea and vomiting or coughing up phlegm. This qi regulating formula's classic indication for use is gagging (with or without vomiting). It addresses liver invading stomach presentations which often carry an emotional component and therefore can address behavioral issues as well.

Bupleurum and Tang Kuei For-

mula is for when liver qi stagnation with spleen qi and blood deficiency is the primary pattern and dampness is secondary with very few (if any) heat signs. This formula can be used independently or with other formulas to increase these functions. Fatigue and loss of appetite are spleen qi deficiency signs. A weak spleen is unable to create enough blood to transport the liver's qi, which becomes constrained and "boils" over, transversely attacking the weak spleen and engendering this condition. Preparing dry-fried ginger (gan jiang) decreases its acidity and reduces its exterior releasing-properties while allowing it to warm the digestion and harmonize rebellious stomach qi (nausea, etc). Likewise, only a small amount of bo he (menthae herba) is added to lessen its function of releasing the exterior (which can further damage blood) while allowing it to lightly free liver qi.

Free and Easy Wanderer Plus: Like many formulas, this is in a family of formulas that represents a natural pattern progression. Liver qi stagnation, as addressed by Bupleurum and Tang Kuei Formula, if left untreated, has the tendency to brew heat, just like a pile of cool-wet-towels can brew enough heat to combust. Moving qi can release some of this excess heat and prevent accumulation of more heat due to stagnation. The classical addition of zhi zi (gardeniae fuctus) and mu dan pi (moutan cortex) accelerates the clearance of heat. Mu dan pi is a unique blood moving herb in that it is cool and does not damage the fluids. In addition, mu dan pi and zhi zi are complimented by chi shao (paeoniae rubra radix), yu jin (curcumae radix) and yi



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mu cao (leonuri herba) to address heat in the blood level. This formula offers gentle vasodilation as chi shao dilates veins while yi mu cao dilates arteries. Zhi zi sedates fire and relieves irritability from all three warmers (jiaos). In this combination, it addresses the liver channel and symptoms such as irritability, red eyes, and inguinal irritations.

Phelgm/Dampness is the most difficult of the triad to dispel. Adding a supportive formula will intensify this otherwise slow treatment strategy. Often a blood-building/spleen-beneficial formula is required after phlegm is resolved to prevent recurrence of this condition.

Citrus and Pinellia Formula: For profuse white sputum/ vomitus, often with lassitude and a thick, white tongue coat and slippery pulses. It can be combined with other formulas to boost phlegm-clearing properties. Drying in nature, this formula should be discontinued when cough/vomit of phlegm subsides. It should not be used with dry cough or blood streaked sputum.

Six Gentlemen Formula is one of the most used formulas for digestive upset. A pale swollen tongue with a white or greasy coat and loose stools is the standard presentation. There may also be a history of pancreatitis, bilious vomiting, inflammatory bowel disease, weak digestion, or gastric hypomotility. It is often used when rich, cloying herbs such as blood/yin tonics cause flatulence, vomiting, or sluggish stools in order to improve digestibility of these formulas.



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