

TRADITIONAL INGREDIENTS

From creating curries to creaky joints – think turmeric

By Dr Richard Allport

In traditional medicine, turmeric is known for its anti-inflammatory properties. Scientific analysis has shown that the active principle of turmeric - curcumin - suppresses the production of chemicals such as TNF-alpha which cause inflammation in the body. The suppression of such chemicals helps reduce pain and swelling.

Dr Richard Allport graduated as a vet in 1973 and began using natural therapies for pets in 1983, said: "For the last 30 years I have spent most of my time treating pets with natural therapies, medicines and supplements. During that time there has often been a dramatic surge of interest in one 'miracle' supplement or another. But nothing is miraculous and there are always new ideas to look at in the field of natural health.

"I have been advising and prescribing turmeric for my canine patients for many years in my veterinary practice, and I can confirm from my personal experience that I find it an invaluable tool in my natural medicine kit to help in the treatment of inflammation and to relieve the symptoms of pain and discomfort caused by it."

Many of these 'new' ideas have been around for a long time. Take turmeric for instance; it's been used for centuries, not only as that well known, distinctive yellow, peppery spice used for curries, but also as a health-giving supplement.

"Dogs, like humans, are prone to inflammatory disease. This is obvious in joint diseases such as arthritis, but many patients with chronic ill health have a constant low-level inflammation which is responsible for many of the degenerative diseases in the body, including joint degeneration.

"Curcumin also helps digestion of food by stimulating bile production and helping break down dietary fats. Dogs, being carnivores, have a digestive tract designed to take in a high protein, high fat diet, so turmeric is a logical supplement to give for this reason," explains Dr Allport.

Studies have shown the effects of curcumin on inflammation has proven to perform positively; research published in 2014 showed it outperformed ibuprofen in people with



arthritis, while a study in 2004 showed it worked better than aspirin and ibuprofen and just as well as anti-inflammatory drugs in general.

Dr Sarah Brewer, Healthspan medical director, adds: "Curcumin lowers inflammation by reducing the formation of inflammatory substances. Like aspirin, it helps to reduce abnormal blood clotting. Unlike aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), however, far from causing peptic ulcers, turmeric has been used to successfully treat gastric and duodenal ulcers, gastric erosions, gastritis and dyspepsia."

There are some similar studies in dogs as well, for instance a report in Research in Veterinary Science in 2016 confirmed the

anti-inflammatory of curcumin in dogs with arthrosis. Dr Allport explains: "Returning to animal research, a 2015 study showed positive effects not only on the intestinal system of rats with irritable bowel syndrome, but also on their brain function via action on neurotransmitters, which made them feel less anxious and depressed. A herbal medicine containing turmeric was given to dogs with ringworm in a study of 2001, and 21 were cured within two weeks."

Naturally, not all these studies are conclusive, but there is a growing body of scientific evidence to add to the centuries of use in traditional medicine that confirms the effectiveness of turmeric in many inflammatory conditions. 🐾