



Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

An organization of farmers, gardeners, and consumers working to promote an economically viable and ecologically sound Vermont food system

BOOK REVIEW: *Herbal Antibiotics* by Stephen Harrod Buhner

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Stephen Buhner got his motivation to write this book when he had an antibiotic resistant illness and successfully used medicinal herbs to cure himself. The book is solidly researched, easy to read and has useful information on how to use plants to treat infections and disease. In addition to information on which plants are effective against (staphylococcus, salmonella, streptococcus), E coli and other organisms, there are also suggestions on plants for improving immune function. There is also information on what part of the plant to harvest, how to prepare it and what dosage sizes to use. Be aware that the book is written for people, so dosages will need to be adjusted to the bodyweight of your livestock.

This book takes an in depth look at a number of plants, some of which you will be familiar with and some which are less commonly used. One of the less commonly known herbs he writes about is juniper, of which he states that *“In vitro studies have shown strong activity against antibiotic-resistant bacteria, especially Staphylococcus aureus”*. Another herb, which is not well known is usnea (which is actually a lichen), which Buhner states *“has strong antibiotic activity against gram-positive bacteria (includes Staph and Strep). In the discussion of garlic, he writes that it is “the most powerful herb for the treatment of antibiotic-resistant disease. No other herb comes close to the multiple system actions of garlic, its antibiotic activity, and its immune-potentiating power... if only one herb could be used to combat an epidemic spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, this would be it.”*

The use of medicinal herbs to treat illness is nothing new. People have used plants as medicine since before recorded history, and they are now being used widely and studied more, particularly as more strains of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and other pathogens emerge. Buhner writes, *“... research has revealed that instead of being a quaint quackery of our forefathers, many herbs possess strong antibacterial qualities, in many instances being equal to or even surpassing the power of antibiotics.”* Herbs, with their complex mix of many constituents, are not subject to resistance from bacteria the same way penicillin or other antibiotics are. For farmers looking for alternatives to antibiotics, this information is presented clearly in this book. It might be worth giving a copy to your veterinarian too.

The book was published in 1999 by Storey books. You can buy it from NOFA VT, your local bookstore (802-434-4122) or directly from Storey (800-441-5700)



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