

Publication

Treatment of organic livestock with medicinal plants : a systematic review of European ethnoveterinary research

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Background: The EC Regulation for Organic Farming states that organic livestock should be treated preferably with phytotherapeutic products. In spite of the high importance of organic livestock in Europe, primarily ruminants, today almost no phytotherapeutic product is registered for livestock. Also, scientific information regarding veterinary phytotherapy is rare. The aim of this paper is to find approaches to cope with health problems of organic ruminants in Europe on the basis of findings from the European ethnoveterinary medicine (EuEVM). Methods: A systematic review of ethno-biomedicinal papers was conducted with the aid of the Scopus database, and 75 papers, from European countries were analyzed regarding ethnoveterinary information. Results: A total of 590 plant species referring to 102 different plant families are reported to be used for animal treatment, with Asteraceae, Fabaceae and Lamiaceae being the most important families. The traditional use of some plant species (e. g. mallow, chamomile, wormwood) corresponds with findings from recent scientific literature. The large number of less studied plant species, such as white lupin as an antiparasitic herb, and Helleborus spp. as potential immunostimulatory agent, opens an interesting field for future research. Conclusions: In general, EuEVM provides interesting treatment approaches for gastrointestinal and dermatological disorders as well as parasitosis. Findings regarding disorders of female genital or respiratory tract are less consistent. Nevertheless, EuEVM offers a solid basis for stimulating research in veterinary phytotherapy in Europe with a perspective to solve animal health problems in organic or even nonorganic ruminant production.

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