

Homoeopathy on the farm - If homoeopathic success is all in the patient's mind, how does this work for animals?

Abstract

"If homoeopathic success is all in the patient's mind, how does this work for animals?"

There is much debate over the efficacy of homoeopathy, how it works and what it does to the recipient patient. Oliver will explore this in the context of the animal kingdom. He will speak from his experiences of keeping 500 head of dairy livestock for 14 years, their health challenges having been resolved primarily by homoeopathic remedies. He will explain that cows are not inherent liars or fraudulent creatures, have no axe to grind, nor a commercial position to maintain or enhance. Furthermore, neither has he, nor did his various herdsmen who undertook much of the disease analysis, remedy selection and application.

Let me start by pointing out that I am not qualified as any sort of medic, nor vet, in the traditional sense of education. However, I, like many people, have an avid interest in what works, and observation of real life.

We should remind ourselves that in America's capital city, Washington, DC, the only monument honouring a physician is one to the founder of homoeopathic medicine, Samuel Hahnemann. I'll bet all those drug promoting lobbyists choke as they drive past it on their way to cajole the politicians and their advisors to continue funding and maintain their gravy train, and people's continued state of not being healthy, or disease.

As for my background, after 13 years of conventional farming, I made a switch, beginning the conversion of my farm to organic methods in 1989. Amongst many other things this necessitated a reappraisal of how we dealt with animals that were ill. At that time, and over the ensuing 15 years, I kept 300 dairy cows and approximately 200 of their offspring. We had always relied on our vet and his arsenal of drugs to resolve illnesses. However before we could do anything, I had to persuade by then herdsmen that this was a workable idea. There was one herd of 120 cows and one of 180, with potentially up to 5 different people in charge of them. The youngstock, the offspring from the cows, were cared for by both the herdsmen (and women), but also students on placements from agricultural colleges. The latter were often dealing with the calves – the most fragile of life-forms, and in need of the most prompt care.

Before I explain what we did, I'd like to say that recently wrote to Professor Ernst following his latest book and self-publicising tirades against homoeopathy. I explained that he might like to look at the successes in the animal world, which I could show him. I also suggested he might like to be doing a similar appraisal of efficacy and risks for conventional medicines. I pointed out that there were worrying antics, that appear to be all too common, in the conventional "drug" world where big money seems to rule too strongly. I said that, fortunately, the "alternative" medical practitioners seem to have a much higher degree of ethics within their ranks, in my experience.

Some may know of a group called "Sense About Science". They are primarily funded by the pharmaceutical and chemical industry corporations who fear their fiefdom is under attack. So, don't expect objectivity, or scientific rationale to be their methods of analysis! There is a SAS document on Homoeopathy that is riddled with prejudice, errors, presumptions and many more points not worthy of a group with 'Science' in their name. I sent them an analysis of it, hoping, in making the effort to put this response together, that the SAS team are actually not blinkered to criticism and another look at the subject. From their reply they clearly are!

And what of Professor Ernst's response? "Thank you for your interest, if my job was to assess conventional medicine, I would most certainly do just that".

So, let me explain what we did over the 15 years of treating half ton cows or newborn calves homoeopathically.

I started by taking all the staff to another farm where they were successfully using homoeopathy. Indeed the herdsman there, Philip Hansford, had written his own book – "The Herdsman's Guide to Homoeopathy" which came to serve as an initial "bible" for us, coupled with other books by esteemed vets such as George McLeod and Chris Day.

I also took the herdsmen to a day seminar given by Chris Day. Lastly I invited Chris to the farm where he talked, MRCVS to MRCVS with our vet. They spent a few hours at the kitchen table and walking around the yards.

We then began implementation, armed with a stock of remedies. We had some immediate successes, with such as Baccillinum for ringworm. However, in the dairy world, the number one threat we all face is mastitis. Fail to deal with it and one faces price penalties on all milk produced when the herd's milk cell count is too high, and for milk discarded while the cow is being treated. This besides the hassle of having to separately manage such animals and the disruption it causes to routines.

Furthermore, the cost of each case, at today's values is over £220, and nationally the cost is well over £100m. Mastitis is one of the three major reasons for culling cows from dairy herds, so it's a disease for which one needs a good strategy.

So what did we do? Conventionally, when a case of mastitis occurred, we had relied on treating the lactating cow with antibiotics. When the lactation ended we'd give each cow an intra-mammary tube of antibiotic – known as "dry cow therapy"? Now we had to research our books, select remedies and observe the results. We also placed in the water troughs some of the general remedies, for whole-herd or group coverage, a practice known as using nosodes. These were applied maybe weekly, at about 5ml per water trough, which typically held 200-500 gallons of water.

The herdsmen monitored each new case of mastitis, recorded all the details and we discussed them. Improvements in all areas swiftly followed, better detection, analysis, remedy selection, application etc.

For all homoeopaths, inevitably, there are more criteria to consider in dealing with illness than just the presented symptoms. It's not just a case of selecting some off-the-shelf broad spectrum remedy. We learnt to assess the illness, the animal's character, the severity of the illness, then the remedy of choice and its strength, i.e. dilution or potency. Now, we were assuredly amateurs in this! To make it harder, our patients could not answer our questions directly, although their bodies and mannerisms did offer plenty of clues to the very observant herdsmen.

However, despite our amateur status, We were immediately impressed by the number of cases of mastitis – and the many other illnesses we tackled, both in calves and cows, responded positively to homoeopathy. We wondered if this was just prophylactic. Could we have been using the drugs wildly and for no reason?

We soon disabused ourselves of this notion, realising that only a goon could come to that conclusion. However, we definitely missed not being able to give the cows their shot of dry-cow therapy. We now had to give much more diligent attention to hygiene when drying off a cow for her 8-10 week gap between lactations.

We did make mistakes sometimes, and then we found we might have to cull a cow. However, the records were kept, the lesson learnt and as ever one aimed to do better next time, which invariably we did. As the years rolled by our arsenal of remedies increased with expanding knowledge and understanding. The herdsman spent many hours studying reference books and reading articles I gleaned for them. We went on farm walks, spoke with others doing like us, and with vets who were homoeopaths. And all this was before the introduction of the internet!

I was involved in several studies by researchers on animal homoeopathy. They were invariably studying mastitis, due to its regular occurrence, economic significance, and control options. We also took part in a University trial of a nosode. What impressed me, and reflected well on my herdsman, was that we invariably had better results than many of those in parallel conventionally managed herds. This was not a one-off result, as we repeated it over many years, as did countless other organic farms.

There was a study undertaken by Hovi and Roderick in 1999 that concluded organic herds had 36.4 cases of mastitis per year per 100 cows, while the conventional herds averaged 48.9. Within this there was a sharp differential between lactation mastitis where the organic herds 'won' by 37.6 to 54.6, while when dry period they lost 28.9 to 9.2. The results also showed higher underlying sub-clinical mastitis in the organic herds, at 135,000 cells/ml v 84,000 in the conventional herds.

If one performs all the normal high-hygiene tasks properly, maintain the milking machine regularly, and keep and use records astutely, then there is no reason why removing most antibiotics need be a daunting prospect – except to the lazy, or unimaginative, farmer. Or, sadly, for one believing everything that the conventionally minded vet tell him – that he'll have all manner of illness and welfare problems to follow such a transition!

Now, it's fair to say we did not succeed with every case. It was then that we resorted to conventional antibiotics, and were extremely pleased to have them on hand. I have always maintained that we did this because we had been unable to assess the type of mastitis we were trying to fight, the severity of the case and thus the potency of the remedy required, or finally that we mis-selected the remedy to use. Indeed we often switched remedies after initial failure, and were successful second time around. However, if we failed, the drug option remained there for us.

So, what else did we treat with homoeopathy? A massive range of ailments and conditions. One abiding memory for me is when our Yorkshire herdsman, who after the vet had assessed the problem and asked Les "yours or mine", invariably saying "mine".

Les had many years milking experience, and having elected to use the homoeopathic option, he was never too proud to admit he'd got it wrong and revert to the tube or bottle. It's not derogatory to say that none of my herdsman had been through educations that delivered them many pieces of paper! But so what? More than once did I hear Les say "bullshit baffles brains".

What else did we cope with? Well, there were fertility issues, foot problems, calving assistance, calf pneumonia and other illnesses to deal with, all dealt with by the same people and using an ever expanding arsenal of remedies.

I recall vividly, not being the one often entrusted with direct intervention by my wary herdsman(!), being at a calving. The cow had barely dilated, and we could hardly get an arm inside the poor beast. However, I suggested we apply a dose of *Caulophyllum 30c*, once every 10 minutes. This worked a treat as one felt the whole birth canal opening up beautifully, and about 45 minutes later a live calf was eased into the world.

This remedy, for those not familiar, is derived from the squaw root, as chewed by many Mexican women before childbirth. We also put the same Caulophyllum 30c remedy into the water troughs of groups of cows within 2 weeks of expected calving, to act as a nosode prophylactically. As an aside, I can tell you that I have recommended this remedy to many women fearing childbirth, including my wife!

Where we were often frustrated was in not having enough time, and sometimes the skills, to record and analyse our results more meticulously. One needs to be able to do this to redefine how each ailment is to be treated and with what remedy.

However, given our lack of medical training, although aided all times by our vet, we without doubt performed some amazing feats, and in my opinion saved many an animal from significant suffering, and, crucially, unnecessary use of drugs. However, I appreciate that this is a very subjective area.

As the years rolled by, I found I had to often face considerable cynicism, anger, disdain and worse from many very conventionally minded farmers and vets, especially while operating in the roles I held in agricultural politics. I have sadly often received the most severe opposition from those who have never fully investigated it and don't understand homoeopathy. The emotive language used by its opponents goes far beyond that of any scientific debate and has led me to believe that the issue is rather one of politics.

It is one thing not to believe, but it's a wholly different one for those purporting to be open minded and/or interested in discovery, to then dismiss homoeopathy on the basis of ignorance, or "not wanting to know". I concluded that for many it was connected to the perceived threat from homoeopathic products, derived from natural resources, and wholly sustainably. For vets and those in the pharmaceutical industry it seemed that homoeopathic remedies posed a big threat to their lucrative drugs arsenal. Farmers and others feared life could become more complex – but then there were often only responding to hype whipped up by their so-called suppliers or advisors! For these critics it is probably a waste of time and money trying to prove whether homoeopathy works or not, being of the ilk "whose opinion changed against their will are of the same opinion still". No amount of placebo-controlled trials are going to convince them that the effects of homoeopathy, which I and hundreds of thousands of others have observed regularly, aren't some 3-card-trick delusion. I find this closed minded ignorance and resistance to enquiry sad, especially coming as it often does, from those supposedly of intelligence and a learning disposition.

Albert Einstein once said it is always unusual to find someone for whom curiosity survives a formal education. Sadly this could be said to be true of many conventional medics.

Despite this, I've had the good fortune to read of and meet many conventional and organic farmers who have adopted homoeopathy, often after watching conventional medicine let their animals down. I have one near neighbour who now rarely calls his vet for anything. He has no axe to grind, no points to prove or score, and has not had a superior education. However, he does get great enjoyment and reward from farming with his animals, and watching them improve their health in the most natural way available – much made possible by homoeopathy.

Where we all struggle is that none of this has been "proven" by "sound science". What we have to ask is whether it changes the outcome? Does it matter? After all, as we all know, once upon a time our forbears did not accept that the world was round.

That we did not know why certain "drugs" worked in their early years of use did not stop them being used. The physicians of the day knew they worked and as a result prescribed them to their patients. Such as with aspirin! We later found out how they worked and now have a better picture. Of course, there have been many drugs where there are later found to be serious side effects. We further know that one of the major causes of death is from officially approved drugs of the allopathic variety.

I've lost track of the number of times that I've read of or had a discussion where homoeopathy is alleged to be unproven and thus must be ineffective. There is nothing so assured as the certainty of the ignorant! We have to accept that many medicines have much less valid research based evidence than most people perceive. We also need to appreciate that homoeopathic remedies as a generic are accepted by the EU for use on farm animals.

Homoeopathic remedies are not disease specific and therefore not sold, as drugs are, to cure a disease. They are selected, ideally by a trained person (medical or lay), to augment the body's efforts to return itself to full health.

To pretend that conventional medicine has all the answers is inaccurate. Farmers often turn to homoeopathy simply because antibiotics and other drugs are not working. Many of them will find that homoeopathy does not work either. However this will often be because their farming methods are maintaining the disease state. Anyone involved with mastitis knows that there are about twenty management aspects to tighten up if one is to prevent, not treat, mastitis.

The pragmatic assessment of a farm's management tools carries a great deal more weight and clarity of thought than endless squabbles about molecules. It is as divisive and irrelevant as squabbles about how many angels could stand on the head of a pin.

Lastly maybe its best to finish with reminding ourselves that there are many good, intelligent people out there using homoeopathy on their farm animals. One such business, Crossgates, arose solely out of then farmer and now owner, being taken by a friend to a talk on the subject in her home town. At the time she was suffering from terminal liver cancer. The speaker devised a course of treatment; she recovered in a year, and began the business. Now, we are not saying that homoeopathy can cure cancer, although some might. What it did do though is that following the removal of the proprietor's cancer, it sparked her curiosity, and created a business.

Crossgates have gone on to sell remedies to tens of thousands of farmers and animal keepers. Perhaps more interestingly, they have many vets on their lists too!

The crunch question is why would these farmers and vets keep coming back for more, creating a need to expand the business and its premises, if homoeopathy was a dud? I know the answer, and it unsettles those who see their profits seriously threatened, despite the fact that health has been restored to many people and animals through the use of homoeopathic remedies.

So, what of the future for animal homoeopathy? We need a major investment in R&D. Using animals is a much easier means to achieve the proof we need than with people. With a fund of £500,000 I am sure I could find the people to undertake the research and prove once and for all that homoeopathy is a positive means of maintaining and restoring health to animals. Then we would be traveling onward and upward!

This would reinforce the fantastic results Chris Day achieved in c.1984. He had been approached by a pig farmer whose herd had been suffering horrendous farrowing problems, with over 20% mortality. Chris had only been involved by the farmer, fairly typically, as a "last resort". The farmer had used every other conventional and alternative option – except one! Chris advised using *Caulophyllum* to treat the sows, on a prophylactic basis, as a nosode in the drinking water. There was an immediate reduction in mortality, and within 3 months it was down from 20% to 1%.

After continuing with this new regime for a while the farmer thought maybe the problem had just disappeared on its own, and the introduction of homoeopathy was nothing more than a coincidence. So he changed how he used the remedy. Within two months the farrowing pigs mortality levels were rising alarmingly, again. The farmer swiftly appreciated his error, and reverted the homoeopathic administration

regime back to the original approach. His pigs were telling him what worked and he was not cleverer than them!

So successful was this trial that Chris wrote it up, as a "Short Communication", and it was published in the Veterinary Record. This greatly impressed the Editor, and his editorial carried it as main item, suggesting that clearly there was a need to conduct more research of this kind and establish the full potential for homoeopathy in the animal world.

Chris set about a much harder task next, as I have already intimated. He decided that he would undertake a trial on mastitis in dairy cows. This was done fully blinded, and proved conclusively successful. So what happened when he returned to the Veterinary Record editor? He was rebuffed, and they never carried the story.

One could argue, if inclined to be sceptical and to favour conspiracy theories, that the piglet trial was published because it threatened no-one's vested interest. The mastitis trial threatened a multi-million pound and very lucrative industry, which in some cases supplied as much as 20% of a veterinary practice's income! Some might suggest this as the reason nothing more was done, but I couldn't possibly support such fanciful thinking.

I would not want to infer that there people with a vested interest who may have leant on anyone on the editorial side, but what other conclusion is there to draw? I well recall a leading farm publication of its day having the advertising by all the major chemical companies withdrawn for two weeks, all because the editor deigned to write something negative in his editorial. He apparently needed to be taught a lesson.

After 15 years, when we successfully treated the same disease with the same remedies, I know Chris' results would stand scrutiny by anyone.

Or else, as I have already said, are my cows liars? Are the hundreds of thousands of all farm animals being regularly restored to good health by homoeopathic remedies congenital liars too? And babies and young children?

I am disappointed to report that Chris regrettably had to take time out to defend himself against a charge of animal cruelty, through withholding (conventional) medication while treating an animal with homoeopathy. I am delighted to report that he won his case, albeit with considerable stress. More importantly I'm delighted that he is still happily in practice, albeit now as a 'referral centre', and not a 'general practice'.

Sickeningly, and with no credit to our legal system, achieving victory came at significant cost to the defendant. However, he was fully exonerated by the judge, with 'no case to answer'. The RSPCA, amazingly, were not asked to pay costs. These were paid from public funds! The RSPCA did not appeal the judgment.

However, after a year, they had him up before the Royal College, who only faded out of the picture after a further year of unpleasantness, when Chris set a judicial review on them. They paid up and dropped the action. The bottom line is that there was no 'mistake', for which Chris should receive understanding from all concerned. The judge said that Chris should hold his head up high, with no stain on his character! Of course, by implication, this also means no stain on homoeopathy either.

This whole case represents appalling behaviour, and knowing the defendant well enough, I am wholly convinced he would only ever act out of sympathy for the animal he was treating. This is not to say that nobody makes a mistake occasionally, but with all animals and their treatment there will be errors. Find me a vet who says he has never made an error and I'll see a liar. It's bound to happen, and we all presumably

appreciate that, and understand that nobody wants to other than restore health to the animal, whatever code of treatment is adopted.

Sadly we know in the human world that the doctors, and especially the drugs they prescribe, are one of the highest reported reasons for deaths. It's a scary thought.

For those who wish to learn more of where homoeopathy can help in the animal world, may I heartily recommend you to courses run by Homoeopathy at Wellie Level, or HAWL.

These are definitely muddy boots courses for those practicing on farms. They use real farms and animals as the examples, are taught by vets and others suitably qualified and experienced.

There are no liars allowed near these courses! As they say, they "teach [conventional and organic] farmers how to use homoeopathy effectively on their own farm" Their website goes on to say "drawing on our combined veterinary, homoeopathic and teaching skills we have put together a course which is as unique as it is inspiring. We have taught over 200 students.

We aim to make the course simple, comprehensive, useful and above all fun. The teaching team are all qualified homoeopathic vets and professional homoeopaths, all with farm experience.

I would also quote from their website the experience of one conventional vet, now additionally trained and qualified as a homoeopathic vet, Graham Goodrich BVetMed. MRCVS VetMFHom. He says that "like most Vets I was a sceptic about the alleged benefits of homoeopathy. Admittedly, I knew nothing about it, but it couldn't possibly work, could it?"

Then, one day, I went to revisit a heifer with Tetanus, which I had been treating with conventional drugs for about 10 days. We were keeping it alive, up until now, but it really wasn't getting any better. However, on the day in question as I walked into the darkened shed in which she was confined, she was standing there chewing her cud as if she'd never been ill!

It turned out that the Vicar's wife who lived next door to the farm and was interested in amateur Homoeopathy had suggested giving the remedy Hypericum 30c. 24 hours later, the heifer was to all intents and purposes "cured". Certainly, she never looked back and went on to calve and join the dairy herd.

I was, to say the least, impressed! I enrolled on the Faculty of Homoeopathy courses, ultimately passed the exam and the rest is history. The incident with Tetanus happened in 1986, and I have been treating animals with Homoeopathy ever since."

Then there is Geoff Johnson, a vet from West Somerset, known to me. His introduction to homoeopathy came thus. "The reason I started homoeopathy for farm animals was because a very valuable Limousin cow was diagnosed with Johnes disease, which is an incurable wasting disease with diarrhoea. I contacted a homeopathic vet for any possible treatment and was advised to try tuberculinum and calc carb in combination.

The scours stopped within 24 hours and the cow went on to have another calf. My definition of incurable changed overnight and since then many "incurable" diseases have responded to homeopathy."

So, I conclude by urging you all, when challenged by scurrilous people, be they from vested interest groups, Government departments, the rat-pack media and others, to ignore their siren ways, and to remind them that there are allegedly "lower life forms" than themselves who can prove that homoeopathy works, have no vested interest, nothing to sell, nothing to prove, but just get better.

Let's hope the future for homoeopathy just gets better too, which if we all pull as one it surely will.

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These two cartoons courtesy of Mike Adams, <http://www.newstarget.com/> and www.naturalnews.com



