



Q You write about so many excellent remedies for humans, but what about pets, who are just as much part of the family for many people, and who must suffer side effects from flea sprays and other conventional treatments recommended by vets?

E Hayes, by email

A I have an 11-year-old jack russell who has the vitality of a dog half her age. I have taken her to a conventional vet only a handful of times, partly because the first dose of puppy vaccines she was given at eight weeks almost killed her.

She also has the innate good sense to run a mile from those flea sprays that smell so awful. Although I cannot back this with research, I can't imagine that using these types of chemicals can be good for your pet in the long run, especially since you spray them directly onto the skin.

The golden rule in our house, when the dog is a pampered family member, is if it is good enough for her, it is good enough for us. In fact, we have her to thank for our introduction to Salcura's products. These spray-on lotions include a number of excellent natural skin-care remedies formulated specifically for pets.

The Natural Insect Repellent Spray really does work to keep fleas at bay. It contains tea tree and manuka (as do the other products for pets), plus citronella, lavender, geranium and mint.

The range for animals also includes the Natural Skin Therapy Spray to tackle common disorders such as eczema, flaking or dry patches, and the Natural Skin First Aid Spray to treat minor cuts and wounds. They all cost £9.99 for a 50ml spray, from Victoria Health (0800 389 8195, www.victoriahealth.com). I use all three on the animals (including hens and geese) in my household, and suggest you do the same.

Q I notice you advise men with high blood pressure against using

the herb saw palmetto to help reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer in later life. What alternative treatments can you recommend?

Name and address withheld

A For more than 20 years, German urologists have been successfully prescribing sawtooth and sawdust to help tackle the symptoms of prostate cancer. This suggests that any natural agent that is rich in the same chemicals will also offer good protection against prostate problems in later life.

In addition, there is growing evidence that prostate and other cancers are linked in some way to an overburdened immune system. I am going to suggest a remedy that contains both sterols and sterolins, and which also works to restore immune functioning and reduce any inflammation.

African potato (which is not a potato, but a tuber) contains beta-sitosterol. In trials reported in the British Journal of Urology, 177 patients with an enlarged prostate were given either beta-sitosterol or a placebo. The former was shown to improve both prostate symptoms and quality of life compared with the placebo.

African potato is available, in a supplement form called Simba, from The Little Herbal Company (01484 685100), which specialises in importing African remedies. The company works with both traditional healers and Western scientists to verify how and why these remedies work.

Simba costs £24.50, plus £2 p&p, for a month's supply. Take as directed on the bottle. This is a small company, so please be patient if it takes time to get through.

Q I am flying to Australia at Christmas to spend time with my daughter, but I am concerned about the risk of deep-vein thrombosis (DVT). I can't take

aspirin, which I know a lot of people use to reduce the risk, because it irritates my stomach. Is there a safe alternative?

D Holder, by email

A Anyone still using aspirin to help counter the risk of a blood clot during long-haul flights (or even long car journeys) may wish to reconsider in the light of a recent report by the British Medical Association outlining its side effects. Also, there is no clear evidence that aspirin offers any significant protection against DVT.

New to the UK market is a better alternative called Zinpro, which has been formulated by a consultant cardiovascular surgeon at one of London's top teaching hospitals, who has conducted extensive research into DVT on behalf of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The active agents in this supplement are the potent antioxidant pyrogallol, extracted from pine bark, and ginger root — a combination that has been shown in clinical trials to promote circulation to the extremities and to reduce travel sickness.

This supplement, which costs £14.99 from high-street pharmacies including Boots and Lloyds Pharmacy, is safe to take as often as required, as there are no reported side effects. You need to start taking it one day before departure.

For more information on natural health, visit my website: www.whatsreallyworks.co.uk

If you have any questions or tips, write to What's the Alternative? Style, The Sunday Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E9B 1ST. We can only provide replies to published letters.

Before following any medical or dietary advice in this column, please consult your GP if you suffer from any health problems or special conditions, or are in doubt as to its suitability.