



Homeopathic Gunpowder: Big Bang from a Small Remedy

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Wildlife rehabilitators frequently see wild animals arrive for rehabilitation with a variety of wounds. These wounds may be from a variety of sources: fishhooks, barbed wire, lawnmowers, traps, tree branches, cats, dogs, bullets, or, even other wild animals. They include abrasions, lacerations, punctures, crushing, degloving, burns, compound fractures, and more. Some of the wounds may be recent and fresh; some are older. Some of the wounds may be relatively clean and unlikely to become infected if untreated; others may be developing infection. Some animals arrive with severe abscesses or septicemia.

Rehabilitators work closely with their veterinarians on establishing wound management protocols. Minor wounds are generally thoroughly cleaned and flushed by the rehabilitators. More severe wounds are likely to be cleaned and treated by the veterinarian, such as those needing suturing or surgery. The continuing treatment may include soaking, debriding, and other treatments. Veterinarians may prescribe antibiotics for wounds, especially those that are severe or already infected.

In the last few years, rehabilitators and veterinarians alike have become increasingly concerned with problems related to antibiotics. It has not been unusual for wildlife on antibiotics to lose their appetite or develop gastrointestinal difficulties (e.g., diarrhea). In many cases, the antibiotics have been prescribed without the bacteria being cultured – so the effectiveness may be limited. There is growing concern about rising antibiotic resistance in wild populations. Holistic veterinarians have also expressed concerns about suppressing symptoms.

While there may be cases when antibiotics are necessary, these and other concerns about antibiotic use with wildlife have prompted wildlife rehabilitators to explore alternative treatment options. Homeopathic literature has many descriptions about the use of homeopathic medicines used with wounds, such as *Hypericum*, *Ledum*, *Calendula*, and *Staphysagria*. Other homeopathic medicines are commonly described for infections, such as *Hepar sulphuris*, *Lachesis*, *Crotalus horridus*, and *Pyrogenium*. Wildlife rehabilitators have used such homeopathic medicines with wildlife after consulting with homeopathic veterinarians. These homeopathic medicines have demonstrated their effectiveness as part of an overall wound management protocol.

Several years ago, the author read about homeopathic Gunpowder in Morgan's Homeopathic Medicine: First Aid and Emergency Care and Sheppard's The Magic of the Minimum Dose. After reading Dr. John Clarke's monograph, Gunpowder as a War Remedy, the author discussed this homeopathic medicine with a small group of rehabilitators. While Gunpowder was not well represented in homeopathic repertories, Clarke and a few other homeopaths described homeopathic Gunpowder as highly effective with infected wounds. Clarke wrote:

"The great sphere of action of gunpowder is in cases of septic suppuration - or, in other words - of wounds that have become poisoned with the germs of putrefaction. ... But Gunpowder may [may] also be used as a prophylactic.

That is to say, it will not only cure septic suppuration when present, but it will afford such protection to the organism against harmful germs, that wounds will be less likely to become septic in one who is under its influence....

Now the great point about Gunpowder is that it has a broad and clear indication that hardly anyone can miss - blood - poisoning. ...

The poison quickly finds its way into the blood - boils, carbuncles, eruptions, abscesses, or other manifestations appear, showing unmistakably that the blood has been poisoned. To all these conditions Gunpowder acts as an antidote."



This group of wildlife rehabilitators was particularly interested in Gunpowder since it could be used prophylactically, at least according to Clarke. Many very small animals, such as young birds, rabbits, and squirrels are commonly admitted to rehabilitation with wounds caused by animals. Even after aggressive wound cleaning and the use of Ledum and Hypericum, and even some antibiotics, some of the wounds still became infected, especially wounds from cats. In some cases, even wounds treated with antibiotics became infected. Waiting until the symptoms of infection were apparent in order to select Lachesis, Hepar sulphuris, or other homeopathic medicines meant the infection could be well established and more difficult to treat, particularly in such small or young animals. A homeopathic medicine that could be given immediately after the wound, but before the infection had become serious and obviously was of high interest.

"The Gunpowder with which we are concerned is the traditional Black Gunpowder, whose three cardinal constituents are sulphur, carbon, and nitre or saltpetre. ...As sulphur, carbon, and saltpetre are three potent medicines known to pharmacy and physic, it is not surprising that a combination of the three should be a medicine of great potency. There is a certain piquancy in the fact that gunpowder is a remedy for the accidents of warfare...."

Gunpowder as a War Remedy by John H. Clarke, M.D.

Clarke and Sheppard described using low potencies of homeopathic Gunpowder and repeating it regularly. However, rehabilitators want to minimize handling of wildlife to reduce stress and risk. Plus, wildlife often arrives with high vital force, and with serious, acute injuries that need immediate attention. As a result, the group believed that the higher potencies might be more appropriate. So the group ordered Gunpowder in 30c and 200c potencies from Natural Health Supply (Santa Fe, NM).

Sample of Cases

In the last couple of years, the homeopathic Gunpowder has been used with over a hundred cases of wildlife admitted for rehabilitation. The group of rehabilitators and their veterinarians found the Gunpowder to be effective with a variety of wounds. The following describes several of the cases. All of the rehabilitators using homeopathy had the appropriate state and federal rehabilitation permits, were experienced with the species admitted, and followed effective rehabilitation practices (diet, caging, etc.). They had attended training on the use of classical homeopathy with wildlife, had repertories and materia medicas, and consulted with veterinarians. Most had Clarke's monograph on Gunpowder. They also used effective wound management protocols, such as thoroughly flushing the wounds and keeping the wounds clean. In all of the cases, the homeopathic medicines were dissolved in water and administered orally unless otherwise described.

Pigeon Injured by Dog

A fledgling pigeon (*Columba livia*) was rescued from a dog and taken to a wildlife rehabilitator later that day. While the bird's vital force was high, he was in shock and seemed terrified. As a standard treatment, the rehabilitator immediately administered *Aconitum napellus* 1m for the severe fear and placed the bird in a quiet, warm cage.

A short while later, the bird seemed considerably calmer. The bird still showed some signs of shock and seemed to have pain when touched, probably from bruising. Since *Arnica montana* is excellent with traumas and shock from injury, the rehabilitator gave the pigeon a single dose of *Arnica* 1m. A deep, wide laceration on the right chest and under the right wing was cleaned with a dilute Betadine® solution. The bird was placed back in the cage to rest.

A couple of hours later, the bird's wounds seemed to have become extremely painful. She repertorized and selected *Hypericum* for its effectiveness with lacerations and extreme pain from injuries. She gave *Hypericum* 1m and placed Calendula gel on the wound. Within an hour, the bird was starting to eat, seemed more alert, and was moving more comfortably.

The rehabilitator was also concerned with the potential risk of infection from the wound. She decided to give the Gunpowder 200c since it could help prevent infection. Within a couple of days, the wounds healed with no signs of infection. The bird was released when he was able to fly effectively.

Cottontail with Degloved Thigh

After rescuing a young cottontail rabbit (*Sylvagus nuttallii*) from her cat, a woman washed the rabbit's wound with a solution of saline and hydrogen peroxide. The rescuer delivered the rabbit to the rehabilitator at a rendezvous site seven hours later. The rabbit had glassy eyes and was in severe shock. The rabbit was given *Aconitum napellus* 1m for terror and shock, and placed in a small, warm transport cage.

By the time the rehabilitator arrived back at the rehabilitation facility, about 30 minutes, the juvenile rabbit (200 grams) seemed less fearful but still showed signs of shock. An examination revealed most of skin was torn from the right thigh. The exposed muscles were raw and seemed very painful. Due to its effectiveness with severe and painful lacerations and shock from injury, the rabbit was given a single dose of *Hypericum* 1m.

Within fifteen minutes, it seemed the pain had decreased significantly since he was eating and grooming. At that time, the wound was cleaned with a solution of dilute Betadine® and then covered with calendula gel. A small amount of Neosporin® ointment was placed over the top of the gel to keep the wound moist in case the veterinarian later wanted to try placing the skin back over the wound. The rabbit promptly returned to eating and grooming.

A veterinarian was contacted. She recommended not replacing the skin over the degloved area due to the fact that eight hours had passed since the injury and the rescuer had used a peroxide solution. Since antibiotics can easily upset delicate gastro-intestinal systems found in rabbits, it was decided to use homeopathic Gunpowder in an attempt to prevent the onset of infection.☒

The rabbit was given an initial dose of homeopathic Gunpowder 200c. The wound was flushed again the second day and calendula gel was applied several times. The wound remained extremely red. Since it was difficult to determine if any infection was apparent, the Gunpowder was repeated one time. The rabbit remained relatively still in the cage and had a good appetite.

The third day the wound was less raw and red. The rabbit was still eating well, but the rehabilitator was concerned about the extreme stress that captivity places on rabbits. The decision was to try to further accelerate the healing by administering a single dose of Calendula 200c. Calendula gel was placed on the wound twice a day.

On the 12th day after the cat bite, the wound was covered with skin, a tiny scab was barely visible, and the rabbit had gained considerable weight. The rabbit was released the following day.

Juvenile Crow with Abscess

A member of the public delivered a juvenile crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) to a veterinarian. The bird had a large abscess on the left side of its head that had broken open and was draining. After thoroughly flushing and cleaning the abscess, the veterinarian transferred the crow to a rehabilitator. He sent along an antibiotic in case the rehabilitator needed it.

On arrival, the rehabilitator noted that the bird, in addition to the abscess, had some bruises and seemed painful when touched. While it was uncertain what had caused the wounds, it appeared to have resulted from some kind of trauma. The bird had high vital force. Arnica montana is well known for its ability to address general trauma, soreness, and pain when touched. Arnica is also listed in bold in Generalities, Abscesses, suppurations. The rehabilitator administered a single dose of Arnica 1m. Within hours, the bird seemed more comfortable, especially when handled.

The next morning, however, the abscess looked much worse and smelled putrid even after it had been thoroughly cleaned. The etiology of the wound was unknown. Her first impulse was to give a homeopathic medicine known to be effective with severe infections.

After repertorizing, she read descriptions of Lachesis, Arsenicum, Silicea, Hepar sulphuris, Mercurius, and Pyrogenium. However, these remedies did not seem to be a close match to the case. While Gunpowder was not well represented in the repertory, she decided to use it due to Clarke's description of its effectiveness with infection. Since time was of the essence, if signs of initial improvement were not noticeable in 12 hours, she would select another remedy or begin the provided antibiotic. Since the bird had high vital force and the condition was grave, she wanted to give a significant stimulus to healing. She administered a single dose of Gunpowder 200c.

Within hours, the abscess seemed smaller and the odor decreased. The crow started eating and moving better. Within a few days, all signs of the abscess were gone and the wound healed. The bird was released with others of its age.

Robin with Deteriorating Wound

A juvenile robin (*Turdus migratorius*) was admitted to a rehabilitation center with several deep cat bites on the body and under its left wing. The wounds were thoroughly washed with a Betadine® solution. Baytril® was administered twice a day on the veterinarian's instructions. While the wounds were cleaned daily, they did not seem to be healing. The robin's appetite decreased. The bird was kept in a small cage with supplemental heat.

On the fifth and last evening of the Baytril®, the rehabilitator found the wounds under the wings had deteriorated. There was considerable black and necrotic tissue on the wound under the wing. The wound also had a highly offensive smell.

As she cleaned the wounds again, the rehabilitator considered the options. The veterinarian would not be available until the next day. She felt that if the Baytril® had not begun to control the infection, other antibiotics might not be effective or able to start fast enough to help the robin. Or, she could try a homeopathic medicine. While not very experienced with homeopathy, she had some homeopathic Gunpowder and knew it had been effective with some severe infections. She decided to give a single dose of Gunpowder 200c that evening. If the bird lived until morning, she would discuss further action with her veterinarian.

The following morning, the wounds looked smaller and no longer contained any black tissue or noticeable smell. The rehabilitator was absolutely astounded with the bird's improvement. The wounds healed completely within a couple of days, with the Robin released a short while later.

Conclusion

Two of the cases described above show how homeopathic Gunpowder was used successfully as a prophylactic to try to prevent infection from occurring. In the other two cases, the homeopathic Gunpowder was used with wounds that were already infected, with one that had deteriorated even after antibiotics. The homeopathic Gunpowder was quite effective as part of a wound management protocol in these four cases. There are additional successful cases where rehabilitators have used homeopathic Gunpowder, such as with the Pelican with the fourteen-inch laceration in his chest and ground squirrel with a septic leg that had not responded to antibiotics. That is not to say that homeopathic Gunpowder is an appropriate for all wounds or a substitute for antibiotics. Nor does this suggest that use of homeopathic Gunpowder ensures a positive outcome. Rather, these cases suggest that homeopathic Gunpowder and classical homeopathic protocols are one more option that might be considered as part of a wound management protocol.

While Gunpowder is not well represented in the homeopathic repertories or a match for all wounds, it seems worth considering. As Lyle Morgan says in *Homeopathic Medicine: First Aid and Emergency Care*, homeopathic Gunpowder "... *is a valuable, but all too often ignored remedy.*" Those who worked these cases are not likely to ignore or forget the beneficial effects of homeopathic Gunpowder.

The Author

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