



Rescue Remedy® and Wildlife in Rehabilitation

Many wildlife rehabilitators have used the flower essence Rescue Remedy® with wildlife in rehabilitation. That interest keeps growing. The following provides some basic questions and answers about Rescue Remedy®.

What is flower essence therapy?

Flower essence therapy uses extracts of various flowers to help patients heal emotionally, and then physically. Flower essences are gentle, non-toxic, non-invasive treatments to alleviate stress and support healing. It is based on the philosophy and clinical findings of Dr. Edward Bach. He believed that the energy of the different flowers was able to help balance a patient's emotional state and energy. Rescue Remedy®, and similar flower essence combinations by other manufacturers, have been used successfully by people in a variety of stressful situations since the 1930's. Veterinarians also have administered flower essences with positive results for over 50 years. Flower essences can be used to complement other medical and veterinary treatments, such as conventional medicines, surgery, or homeopathic remedies.

Dr. Edward Bach, a British physician, bacteriologist, homeopath, and researcher, strongly believed that there was a connection between feelings and physical illness. As a result, he developed an approach that used flower essences to address mental and emotional states - and physical conditions. Bach believed flowers bring forth renewal that correspond to new growth and higher consciousness. He further believed that the flower heads and petals stored the highest, purest healing energy and correspond with the subtle, higher vibrations of man's consciousness. Bach placed freshly picked flower petals a bowl of water in the sunlight for several hours - which he called 'sun potentization'. The potentized water was filtered, preserved with alcohol, and poured into stock bottles for use. Bach identified thirty-eight flowers that he believed addressed various emotional states. These flower essences could be used individually or combined as needed.

What is Rescue Remedy?

In the early 1900's, Dr. Bach combined five flower essences that address different emotions related to acute crises because he found that they worked well together synergistically: Rock Rose, Cherry Plum Clematis, Impatiens, and Star of Bethlehem. He called this combination Rescue Remedy® since it helps with the emotional states of sudden anxiety, fear, terror, shock, and trauma.

What is Rescue Remedy® used for?

Some rehabilitators give Rescue Remedy® to wildlife when an animal arrives in rehabilitation because the wild animal often is fearful, anxious, in shock, and possibly in physical distress or pain from an injury. Some rehabilitators have administered Rescue Remedy® when wild animals are placed in a stressful situation during rehabilitation, such as when transferred to a new cage, transported to a veterinary clinic, etc. Rehabilitators report that wild animals seem much calmer and less stressed after receiving a dose of Rescue Remedy®. Rescue Remedy® is not a substitute for treating physical conditions such as dehydration, infections and GI disorders.

Is administration difficult?

Standard directions for use on the package have suggested placing a drop or two from the Rescue Remedy® eyedropper in the mouth or on skin. However, since it contains alcohol (27%), administering Rescue Remedy® straight from the manufacturer's bottle could be too strong for wildlife and tender skin. Plus, trying to give Rescue Remedy® by placing a drop from an eyedropper into a wild animal's mouth could be dangerous for the animal and person, and easily contaminate the eyedropper.

Although Rescue Remedy® can be administered directly from the manufacturer's bottle there are alternative delivery methods. Some people use a purchased bottle of Rescue Remedy® as the 'mother' bottle. They prepare other treatment bottles for daily use by placing a couple of drops of Rescue Remedy® in a small sterile bottle (e.g., amber) of spring or distilled water. They then add a few drops, or up to 20%, of alcohol (e.g., unflavored brandy; vodka) or apple cider vinegar to minimize chances of bacteria from growing. These treatment bottles then have the same calming energy of the original bottle of Rescue Remedy® and can be used easily. They also can last a fairly long time. There are some advantages to preparing treatment bottles. They prevent the purchased bottle from being contaminated by touching the eyedropper to mouths, skin, fur, or feathers. It's easy to place treatment bottles in convenient places (e.g., first aid kit, rehabilitation rooms, car), and it extends the purchased bottle, making Rescue Remedy® less expensive to use. If Rescue Remedy® is going to be used in a very short time (i.e., a week), a drop of it can be placed in a bottle, bowl or glass of water. That container is described as having the same energetic essence or picture of Rescue Remedy, but less alcohol. The Dr. Edward Bach Centre website says that there is no difference in potency or speed of effect when using drops from a treatment bottle or the manufacturer's bottle.

How is dosing determined?

A drop from the prepared treatment bottle of Rescue Remedy® can be dripped on an animal's skin, fur, feathers, shell, etc. A drop also can be placed on the bedding, in a water bowl, or in/on food or formula. It can be misted through a cage and on to an animal. A drop can be put in a water container for the animal to drink. Rescue Remedy® does not have to get into the mouth – it just needs to somehow touch the animal. It does not seem that the amount of Rescue Remedy® matters - just that some gets on or in the animal.

How fast does Rescue Remedy® work?

Rescue Remedy® is used mostly commonly with acute conditions and seems to work fairly fast: within minutes. Other flower essence preparations used with longer term emotional conditions may take more time to work.

Can it be repeated?

Rescue Remedy® can be repeated. However, when the animal is calmer, there is usually no need to keep repeating it or for keeping it in a water bowl. Rather than repeat Rescue Remedy® more than a couple of times, efforts should be made to minimize the animal's stress as much as possible. For example, promptly take the animal from the rescuer. Minimize handling, strong odors, visual stressors, and noise (e.g., phones, loud talking, and equipment). Provide a safe and secure place for the animal to hide and rest. Keep the cage away from people, pets, and potential wild predators.



How does Rescue Remedy® work?

While it is not exactly clear how Rescue Remedy® works, it is believed to act on an energetic level. This is very different from the chemical mechanisms of conventional drugs (e.g., antibiotics, anti-inflammatories) or botanical medicines (i.e., herbs).

How are flower essences made?

There are several methods used to make flower essences. One method, called 'sun potentization,' involves gathering petals of specific flowers, placing them in a bowl of distilled or spring water, and leaving them in the sun for several hours. The 'potentized' water is strained and placed in bottles. Another method is to place the gathered petals in water, bring the water to a boil, collect the steam or leave the water to cool, and bottle the flower essence with a preservative such as brandy or vinegar.

Several companies make flower essences, including combination flower essences that are similar to Rescue Remedy®. More information on these is available from the Flower Essence Society and Australian Bush Flower Essences.

Is Rescue Remedy® herbal or homeopathic?

Flower essences are not botanical medicines even though they are made from plants. A primary difference between the two is that flower essences work energetically, not chemically. Like homeopathy, flower essences work on an energetic or vibrational level and support the body's own healing process. However, they are not homeopathic since they are not potentized through dilution and succussion. There are no 'homeopathic provings' conducted on flower essences to determine the picture of the substance, and they are not prescribed according to the concept of simillimum (i.e., "like cures like") developed by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann. Rescue Remedy® can be used in conjunction with homeopathic remedies.

Does Rescue Remedy® actually work?

Dr. Allen Schoen, co-author of *Complementary and Alternative Veterinary Medicine: Principles and Practices* wrote, "There is no good research on their mechanism of action, effects, or success rate. ... All that is available are anecdotal reports of success. ... Despite all these caveats, there are sufficient anecdotes from the public concerning their benefits and there appear to be no side effects". Many rehabilitators who have used Rescue Remedy® with wildlife agree with the benefits described by Dr. Schoen. Examples of wildlife cases abound. A recent example involves a rabbit after it was untangled from a soccer net by several exuberant and caring children and taken to a rehabilitator. The rabbit's eyes were wide open in fear. It was cold, collapsed, and breathing rapidly. The rehabilitator took the rabbit from the children, dripped a drop of Rescue Remedy® from a prepared treatment bottle on its fur, and put it in a small, warm cage with a place to hide in a quiet, low light room. Fifteen minutes later, the rabbit was sitting and breathing more normally. No injuries were apparent in the examination. A short while later, the rabbit was eating and grooming. It was released that evening.

In another case, a veterinary clinic asked a rehabilitator to pick up a fledgling Robin that had been found at the door when they opened that morning. When the rehabilitator arrived, one of the staff was holding and petting the bird while the clinic cat stared from the counter. The rehabilitator quickly placed the Robin in a quiet, warm, and covered basket and took it to her car. The fledgling was cool, breathing rapidly and seemed very stressed. She dripped a drop of Rescue Remedy® from her treatment bottle onto the bird. Then she went back into the clinic, thanked them for calling her and explained the need to minimize handling of wildlife and keep it away from predators, such as cats and dogs. She was assured that the cats had not touched the bird, but the bird had fallen on the floor. By the time she returned to her rehab facility, the bird was calmer, gaped, and ate. Examination revealed signs of general bruising and soreness. The rehabilitator dissolved a couple of pellets of homeopathic Arnica montana 30c in water and administered two doses of the Arnica for the trauma. By afternoon, the Robin seemed much better. The next day the fledgling was placed with other Robins. His recovery was uneventful, and he was released several weeks later.

Conclusion

While it may be unclear how Rescue Remedy® works, many rehabilitators report that it has been effective with wildlife cases where acute stress and fear are anticipated or apparent. Rescue Remedy® is easily accessible and inexpensive. There are no known adverse side-effects. It is easy to use by placing a drop on the animal through a cage, misting, or putting a drop in a water bowl. Plus, Rescue Remedy® is complementary to conventional, homeopathic, and other health care approaches. As always, safe and effective rehabilitation practices should be followed. Veterinarians should be consulted for serious medical conditions. Flower essences should not be substituted for other veterinary care or good rehabilitation practices.

Resource list

- Bach, Edward and F.J. Wheeler. 1979. *The Bach Flower Remedies, Including Heal Thyself; The Twelve Healers; and The Bach Remedies Repertory*. Keats Publishing, Inc. New Canann, CT.

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- Dr. Edward Bach Centre. www.Bachcentre.com
- Kaminski, Patricia and Richard Katz. 1994. Flower Essence Repertory. Nevada City, CA.
- Schoen, Allen M. 2001. Kindred Spirits: How the Remarkable Bond Between Humans and Animals Can Change the Way We Live Bach Flower Remedies and Flower Essence Therapy: Fact or Fiction. www.dr Schoen.com.
- Rescueremedy.com – company website for more info

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