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Traditional homemade herbal remedies used by farmers of northern Switzerland to treat skin alterations and wounds in livestock

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Kongressbeitrag

Ethnoveterinary surveys are missing for wide areas of Europe. During the years 2011 and 2012 80 farmers on 64 farms in seven cantons of Northern Switzerland (Aargau, Zürich, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Thurgau, Appenzell Innerhoden and Appenzell Ausserrhoden) were interviewed. More than 500 homemade herbal remedies (HMHR) were documented regarding the used plant species, modes of preparation, dosage, routes of administration, category of use and origin of knowledge. A selection was made by choosing all HMHR which (a) contain only one herbal drug, (b) are used to treat skin alterations and wounds, (c) were administered to the skin, (d) were obtained from forefathers and relatives and (e) have been used by the interview partners themselves at least 5 times during the last five years. The two latter criteria were introduced to analyse only formulations with a high level of tradition. The 34 selected HMHR contained twelve plant species from 8 families. The most frequently used plant species were from the family of Asteraceae (Table 1), and flowers were the most often used plant parts. The processing of the herbs included mostly extraction with oil/fat or water, but also maceration with ethanol of varying percentage. In contrast, fresh Comfrey roots were grated and administered directly to the skin. The formulations where used in 49 different applications for treatment of wounds and other skin alterations in livestock, mainly in cattle. Whenever possible, the weight of the used plant was determined to calculate concentrations in g drug equivalent per 100 g of finished product. Most of the documented concentrations were in a lower range compared to literature. The uses of the most frequently named medicinal plants (chamomile, marigold and St. John's wort) can be regarded as well founded, considering recent pharmacological and clinical data. Other plants identified in this survey should be subject to further studies. (connect the author for references)