

# Zoopharmacognosy:

## A Special Interview with Caroline Ingraham

By Dr. Karen Becker

**KB:** Dr. Karen Becker

**CI:** Caroline Ingraham

**KB:** Hi, this is Dr. Karen Becker. Today I have a super fascinating interview that I'm really excited about. I'm interviewing Caroline Ingraham. Caroline founded Applied Zoopharmacognosy having spent about three decades researching and observing how animals work to heal themselves.

She works with both wild and domestic animals, and has been featured in many scientific journals as well as magazine articles. She's also written several books herself. The latest book will be released yet this spring. Caroline has appeared on lots of TV shows: the BBC and the National Geographic. She also has been a featured guest at the Hay Festival. It's an honor to have you, Caroline. Thank you so much for joining us.

**CI:** Thank you, Karen. Thank you for inviting me.

**KB:** The first time I had a nice introduction to what you do was at the conference where we both lectured at last year. I think I was telling you, I sat enamored and fascinated, but also emotionally overwhelmed as a veterinarian, because what you were lecturing about not only resonated with me as a wildlife rehabilitator, but it resonated with me as a holistic vet for so many different reasons.

But I'll be honest, I had to practice. In my seat, I was practicing how to say "zoopharmacognosy," because it didn't roll at my tongue at that time. I know that you've spent your career in this field, and yet so many people, including myself, don't know what the field is. Why don't you spend a little bit of time and help our readers and listeners to understand what you do?

**CI:** OK. Zoopharmacognosy is the study of how animals self-medicate in the wild. The name actually comes from the Greek "zoo" (animal), "pharma" (pharmacy), and "cognosy (knowing)." It's in the cognitive part of the brain. What I do though is Applied Zoopharmacognosy, which is where we bring remedies to the animals, such as plant extracts, clay, algae, Dead Sea mineral mud... Plant extracts and plants they've evolved with in the evolutionary history. If the problem is a physical or behavioral, then they have a wide range of remedies to select from to bring themselves back into health.

**KB:** What was your introduction to this? How were you introduced to this amazing field?

**CI:** I began with Robert Tisserand studying essential oils for humans. I was so amazed with the response that the essential oils had on myself with cystitis and also my father, diverticulitis. They did clear the condition. The dog I rescued from Battersea Dogs Home. She was quite colicky but she also responded better to lots of these remedies.

But it wasn't really until I moved to California that the learning really began. That was with horses. There were the most amazing teachers. They were very clear with what they wanted. If a horse was wounded, it would select yarrow. If they had allergies, very often they would select German chamomile. For

separation anxiety or if they lost a member of the herd, they would select berry. A whole passion began to evolve. It was absolutely fascinating.

Then this went one step further. When my dog was bitten by a rattlesnake, he was rushed to the vet. There was nothing they could really do for him, because he hadn't responded to the drip. He was sent home the next day really to die. He wasn't conscious enough to do the self-selection process with.

As you know from rattlesnake bites, they die from internal bleeding. The animal dies from internal bleeding. Blood was coming out of his nose. I took the information from the horses. It was that carrot seed essential oils at any time for internal bleeding.

I put it in a capsule, put a little bit of fatty oil, because I didn't want to irritate the mucus membrane. Basically, I put it in a gelatin capsule. He managed to swallow it, and the blood immediately subsided from dripping. It went from fast drip to slow drip. This continued through the night at a four-hour interval of me offering or giving more capsules. The following day, he was pretty much back to health with just traces of blood around the kitchen floor.

And it would appear that I began deeper research into how animals behaved in the wild. What remedies do they select to bring themselves back into health? Then I began to apply that to dogs and it's absolutely fascinating.

**KB:** It's completely fascinating. As a wildlife biologist, we know that animals, wild animals, self-medicate constantly. They have nature really as their pharmacy. They will eat and consume or apply it where they need it. However, dogs and cats are companion animals kind of held captive in our homes. We don't give them the opportunity to self-medicate or to self-select.

From your own personal experiences, how did this morph into you... At this point, I know you're training others. I'm signed up to take a class with you. But I know that you have made this, over the last 30 years, a career in helping people help their animals have the option to self-medicate. Was it basically case by case after your own dog?

**CI:** Yeah. Basically, I then came back to the UK. When I was in the States, I was just really helping other people, watching observations. I then I came back to the UK. It then slowly pick up. It wasn't a fast take-off. It was people sort of easing themselves into trusting their domestic animal with disability to self-medicate. I think that's quite difficult for a lot of people.

**KB:** Yes. The companion animal veterinarian side of me thinks about the Labradors and the golden retrievers that eat anything, anything – from lint to toxic substances. The analytical part of my brain says, "Knowing that wild animals still maintain substantial common sense, they have to, to remain alive. Sometimes, domesticated animals potentially have lost the ability to discern wisely." Have you seen domesticated animals make bad choices in what you've offered them, or no, they still have innate abilities to choose wisely?

**CI:** If the dog didn't have the ability to self-medicate, it would never have survived this evolutionary history. With that innate ability, it would take generations before it became extinct. I've never seen a dog not be able to self-medicate. The dogs that eat socks, the dogs that eat stones, I love working with them, because it's fascinating to see what they select.

I'll give you an example. I had a dog come into my classroom. He eats pens, toys, notes, stones, so much so that he's had operations to have stones removed from his stomach. He came to the classroom. He was desperate for spirulina, barley grass, rose hip powder, and licorice root. He took a lot of these powders and afterwards just plumped down onto the floor in a deep sleep. Previously, he was really anxious. This

is a dog that has quite an intense behavior. He never relaxes. He barks all the time in the car. After these remedies, on the floor fast asleep.

Later that evening, he got up and was being quite playful but had no interest in eating any stones. That was, maybe now six months ago, and still he has no interest in eating stones. His owner does offer him now remedies, such as barley grass and spirulina. Obviously, something's going on with his stomach. There was some nutrient that needed.

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There was another dog I worked with who walked into my room with the remedies. They said, "I think he's just going to eat you out of house and home. This dog only selected German chamomile and hadn't selected anything else, not even coconut oil. These remedies pack and coat the stomach.

If one asks the question, is that individual eating... Is he eating anything and everything because because he needs to coat his stomach? I do notice that these animals do always select stomach remedies or nutrients. What I also find really fascinating is dogs that can tolerate raw food, they seem to select a lot of antibacterial oils and a lot of [inaudible 10:56] together, which is really fascinating.

**KB:** Some of the examples you gave when I heard you lecture, lots of examples, were about animals that have Pica. They want to eat poo, rocks, sticks, and dirt; some of them to the point of having behavior issues. I know that you were able to really help those animals select what they needed to not just manage their behavior issue but to cure them of that desire to want to eat inappropriate things.

Interestingly, in addition to the physical improvement of maybe a behavior problem that was induced from dietary deficiency or the need for their bodies to be provided something that we're not providing. The interesting part of what you were showing was oftentimes other behavior issues, fear issues... Animals that, let's say, had fear of men. There was an amazing video you showed of helping animals provide options to self-soothe them in a stressful situation. It actually goes far, far beyond just medicating, self-medication for certain conditions where you can see that there's a problem. You also do a lot with "behavior issues," right?

**CI:** The work can really give you a good idea about what's going on with behavior. It seems to divide it into two categories: 1) the behavior is born out of a physical problem that's hidden. The dog might become insecure. He might become irritable.

I'll give you some examples. One is a dog called Dylan. Dylan hid in cupboards more or less for 10 years, didn't really like to go out for a walk, and urinated inside the house so much so that his owner or his guardian couldn't put any floorboards down. The bedding was always drenched. It wasn't incontinence; it was cocking his leg that and him urinating in the house.

Anyway, she brought him to me and she was really concerned that he would either bite me or spend his time under the chair. Anyway, he selected two main remedies: one was for his stomach, ginger, and the other thyme: antibacterial. Sorry, also German chamomile.

German chamomile, he wanted to apply it on his stomach. This was the first time in nine years that anybody had touched his stomach. He was soothed by the touch. German chamomile is a world-renowned anti-inflammatory and helps protect the lining of the stomach. Ginger, he spent a lot of time with ginger and also pine essential oil and also thyme essential oil.

This was in January this year. It has now been three months, and Dylan hasn't urinated in the house. He goes out for walks. He's a completely different dog. The problem was he obviously felt vulnerable. Urinating outside brought a message for all the dogs in the area that would tell them his condition – not

only who he is, what he eats, but also his health. Not many dogs want other dogs knowing that they're weak. Hence, he would urinate inside the house.

I also found similar examples that dogs who are yanked on their leash, they're on pain killer remedies, so in between their shoulders just above or around the neck area. These dogs have become really scared until their problem's worked out, which makes a little sense. If an individual is in some kind of pain or discomfort, they're going to feel more vulnerable, so they're going to be clingier. They're mum. They're not going to walk into the world with confidence.

There are so many hidden problems that wouldn't be obvious to anybody unless you ask the dog. One way you could ask the dog is with this common language of aromatics. They would tell you exactly what they need and where they want it applied by their body language. It's absolutely amazing.

We have this side of behavior in a dog who's afraid of fireworks. There is often a physical connection associated with that. It's almost like you just turn the volume down. Either after they've been treated or after they've treated themselves, they become a very healthy confident dog.

Then you've got the other side of behavior where something's actually happened to a dog. Perhaps it's a man, perhaps the dog has been beaten up. In this case, I work with calming remedies to calm the dog's mind. You would choose which one is the most soothing to them. Some of the remedies will work specifically on increasing GABA, which helps inhibit glutamate which actually makes neurons. Others work with glutamate directly. Other remedies will work with adrenaline. Those works are scientifically researched, studied, and documented.

Often different remedies match the individual. A little bit like certain pain killers match certain individuals more than others. You bring your dog into really sort of calm state. With his favorite remedies, you get the trigger. In this case, if it's a man, you spray remedies, if you can get aromatic waters, you can spray this onto the individual. Then you need to get perhaps some Lynden blossom, which is often selected for trust. That's put on the trigger's hands. Perhaps valerian as well a well, a well-known calmer, on the trigger's hands and maybe some hops.

What happens is the individual, the trigger, walks into the room slowly. At this point, the dog will become a little bit more alert. When they become alert, you then offer the oils, and that calms the dog. Now, he's actually looking at the trigger, feeling pretty relaxed and pretty calm. You're changing his perception of the man. He's actually no longer a threat. He's something nice, because feeling good while he's looking at him at a deeply subconscious level.

You never leave it to the point that a dog goes above that threshold. You just catch them as they look anxious by putting the aromatics under the nose of the dog. You keep it there. You keep the oils there until the focus is broken. Then he'll create a focus and the dog will look away. The man will then come a little bit closer, looking, say, in the opposite direction and maybe sit on a chair as fast as he can before the dog becomes alert again. You do the same thing.

Then it gets to the point where you hand the oils to the man. The man is now the healer. The man gets closer, the dog takes the healing from the man. I've had dogs at Bath Cats and Dogs Home that have joined up one... The quickest one was within a couple of hours. That was a dog that would attack every man inside if he could. He had been there for six months. He was put in the home because he couldn't cope with men.

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Another dog quite similar within 12 hours. It began in the afternoon and followed it through the following day. He was rehomed to a family with a boy in the family he used to be very, very close to. It's amazing. It's amazing what can be achieved.

I work with primates in the same way: the self-harm. With primates, we can achieve that within an hour, with primates that have been in solitary confinement for six years. If they saw a human or another primate, they would self-mutilate. Within an hour, the females were presenting themselves to the males. They could have cameras in front of them.

It's amazing to be working with sense of smell, which is their language. I don't know if this is relevant but what I found fascinating was that it did have that response to primates, because it did have that response with humans. I thought about it.

I thought about my years in California with my children and working with the oils there. It was very successful with babies. One thing in common that primates and babies and the rest of the animal kingdom have is they use the nasal organ for their communication. When speech comes into play, then speech seems to take over. They seem to have the same powerful response to the aromatics.

**KB:** Just in you giving those examples, 1) you stand in awe of the plant kingdom that provides these thousands of endless resources for us to be able to help our animals have access to, and 2) the veterinary perspective or the doctor perspective, which historically we're trained thinking, "We will prescribe for you." Even if it's natural, "I will pick the herb for the patient."

And really, what zoopharmacognosy does is empower the animal, knowing that he/she knows his/her body best, to make wise decisions for their own body. They know exactly what they need. We're just giving them that opportunity to fulfill that, which is enlightening and inspiring and exciting – all of those things.

You had video example after video example, when I saw you lecture, of amazing... I don't want to say helpless cases. But you really see animals that traditional trainers, traditional behaviorists, traditional medications, alternative holistic medications, every possible protocol had not been successful.

They end up allowing the animal to pick what the animal needs. Not only is there success, it's often swift and cured, and brings that animal back to a state of balance that was otherwise previously not thought possible. You're just inspiring with what you're teaching people and what you're providing to the animal kingdom really is totally inspiring.

If people want to learn more like I did, this is a nice brief, kind of overview about an introduction to this fascinating field of allowing animals to medicate themselves. If they want to learn more, where would they go?

**CI:** They could contact my website: [www.Ingraham.co.uk](http://www.Ingraham.co.uk).

**KB:** Tell us a little bit more. I had the opportunity (thank you) to have a brief glimpse about your upcoming book. Talk a little bit about what your book is going to cover, examples but also I think some options for people to be able to begin using this at home, right?

**CI:** Yeah. It's a step-by-step guide to communicating with your dog through aromatics, through smell, through their language, their common language as to what do they need to help themselves by bringing them back into physical or mental health. Is there a problem that they're unaware of? Do they need more nutrients, and if they do, how much and which? It's absolutely amazing when you get this communication with your dog.

I'm also going to explain why a dog might poison himself, because that's probably one of the first questions. Most people would say self-medication is so great, accurate, how come dogs poison themselves with anti-fleas or chocolate or grapes? It can be explained actually.

Anti-fleas, rat poison, chemicals are substances that they have not been fed with in their evolutionary history. They're not able to recognize it as opposed to a food or a poison. Very often they're masked with sweeteners so the animals will treat them as food.

Chocolate is from the cocoa plant. The plants in the Amazon, which often are plants that are tropical, also have not been in dogs in recent history. They can't detect or identify these plants, because their ancestors have never come across them. But all the remedies that we work with – the essential oil from Indonesia – it will have evolved with the dog and they will be able to identify the chemicals in all our essential oils.

Grapes, I had a lot of difficulty understanding why a dog would poison himself with grapes, because that has been an issue. I researched further, and I found the first grape poisoning wasn't until 1999. What happened in 1999? Then I noticed that meerkats would get certain grapes and would roll them off in clay. The other grapes were fine; they would eat them straight off. Parrots would peel the skin off some of the grapes. It's probably the toxin, the fungus on the grape's skin that perhaps is causing problems with the dogs. That's all explained in the book.

Both ways of working with behavior – whether it stemmed from a physical problem or a traumatic event in the past – will be covered. Yes, so a step-by-step guide.

**KB:** Exciting really. Just a great tool for anyone, any pet parent watching that has an unexplained behavior you can tell that your dog or cat is exhibiting repeatedly that is new or concerning for you. If you've got questions that your holistic veterinarians or behaviorists can't answer, this is a brand-new field that will inspire you. You have inspired me, Caroline. Thank you so much for all that you do.

**CI:** Thank you, Karen. Thanks for inviting me and letting me tell my story.

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