

BAZAAR DRUGS IN VETERINARY  
PRACTICE. I.

Most of the common drugs mentioned in the Pharmacopœia are, to a certain extent, obtainable in our bazaars. They are no doubt far from pure, but they recommend themselves on account of their cheapness, and the ease with which they can be procured, especially in places where a chemist's shop or a dispensary is hardly ever to be met with. There is on the other hand some little difficulty in utilizing these drugs. First and foremost, there is the difficulty as regards their names. The bazaar parlance is different from the chemist's, and even the common names of the drugs are seldom known to the retailers in the bazaar, who have their own names for the different articles they expose for sale, some of which are Sinhalese, some Tamil, or corruptions of other Indian lingos.

The second difficulty experienced is in regard to the purity of the drugs, which are not subjected to any process of purification before they are exposed for sale. Hence, it is of great importance to know the likely impurities which they may contain, and the best method of getting rid of them. It is also important, that the purchaser of bazaar drugs should be able to distinguish the different products from one another, as it frequently happens that the bazaar man himself is quite ignorant of the substances with which he deals. He no doubt labels his different drugs, but if by some means these labels are lost, one cannot possibly depend on his knowledge to classify and name the drugs on his own account. Again, failures are often experienced in the use of drugs obtained from the bazaars on account of their being spoilt through being kept in store for a long period. All these difficulties have to be fully realized in using these drugs. But the advantages set forth, viz., cheapness and accessibility, are two important factors to be considered, and with a little care and trouble bazaar drugs could be utilized to great advantage. The few notes appended hereto regarding some of these drugs will, it is to be hoped, help in some way in extending their use:—

**Nitre.**—Saltpetre Potassæ Nitras, Potassium Nitrate. *Sing.*, Vedilunu; *Tamil*, Pettiluppu; *Indian*, Shorakar.

This salt is met with in many parts of Northern India, Persia and Egypt in the form of an incrustation on the surface of the soil. The incrustation itself is not pure nitre, but contains a large proportion of the substance. The formation of this deposit is due to the potash found in these soils, coming in contact with nitric acid. The crude matter is purified by dissolving in water and by the addition of potash carbonate, obtained by burning plants. Repeated solutions in water and subsequent evaporations make the material more or less pure. The chief impurities met with are common salt, and nitrate of lime, but none of these impurities affect the value of nitre as a drug. Another method of preparing nitre is in vogue in France and other European countries. Manure and vegetable and animal refuse are collected in heaps, and to these are added from time to time, lime in different shapes, whether it be plastering from old buildings or gypsum, &c.; the heaps are sheltered from rain, but freely exposed to the action

of the air. They are thus left for over two years, and at the expiration of the period are dissolved and purified much in the same way as in the case of natural deposits. It is stated that at one time nitre was prepared in Ceylon from bats' dung, large deposits of which are often found in caves and under ledges of rock in the less populated regions of the island. Nitre in the bazaar is generally seen in the form of white (generally dirty white) crystalline fragments. It gives a peculiar cold tingling sensation when placed on the tongue. When a piece of nitre is thrown into fire or on red hot charcoal it deflagrates. If a small quantity of the salt is dissolved and mixed with a few drops of sulphuric acid and warmed in a test tube it gives off red fumes.

The action of nitre is very rapid, it enters the blood easily and in its course reduces blood pressure; further, it promotes perspiration and increases the flow of urine. It also acts beneficially on the lungs. In all febrile diseases, repeated doses of nitre prove to be of great use. It has also slight laxative properties. Horses may be given an ounce at a time and cattle one to two ounces; dogs take from four to eight grains and cats half this quantity. In large doses nitre is a poison. In man an ounce of nitre generally produces toxic effects, whereas horses and cattle tolerate large quantities, from  $\frac{1}{2}$  a pound to a pound being required to produce poisonous effects. A solution of nitre in water applied externally is a good refrigerant. Nitre does not spoil by keeping. A pound of it costs from 20 to 25 cents in the bazaar.

**2. Alum.**—Alumen, Aluminium Potassium sulphate; *Sing.*, Sinnakkaram; *Tamil*, Phitkari; *Hindi*, Phitkari.

There are three varieties of alum known in commerce; of these the principal and the most commonly used is potash alum, the other two being known as soda alum and ammonia alum. Potash alum is prepared by calcining shale or clay and treating it with sulphuric acid. The resulting liquor contains sulphate of aluminum, to which is added potash, when alum is formed. Alum is found in the bazaars in the form of white crystalline masses, having a sweet-acid-astringent taste. Ammonium sulphide and strong ammonia solution added to a solution of alum gives a white precipitate. Alum is an astringent used both internally and externally. Internally administered it arrests the various secretions such as sweat, urine, milk, &c. It is useful in diarrhoea and dysentery. Externally it is a useful application in wounds and also in diseases of the eye. It also arrests bleeding.

W. A. D. S.

REVIEW.

In our issue of July 1892, we began a series of Zoological Notes for agricultural students, and by way of preface said that agricultural students generally experience much difficulty in isolating from large and comprehensive text-books, such matter for study as would give them a knowledge of animals, whether they belong to highest or lowest orders of the kingdom, whose life-history is more or less of interest to the agriculturist. Our object as then stated was to supply the want of a convenient collection of notes for agricultural students.