

# GARLIC

## FRIEND OR FOE?



By Deva Khalsa DVM

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) has been valued for thousands of years for its medicinal purposes. Five thousand year old Sanskrit and Chinese medical manuscripts describe the benefits of garlic. Today, garlic is grown all over the world and is making a strong comeback as a potent, effective, natural remedy.

Garlic is a member of the lily family and of the same genus as the onion. Garlic has been used for thousands of years as a medicinal herb: in fact, Hippocrates advocated garlic for infections, cancer and digestive disorders. The great Roman naturalist, Pliny the Elder, also recommended garlic for a wide variety of ailments, ranging from the common cold to epilepsy and cancer.

Modern science has also established the fact that garlic boosts immunity, gets rid of bacterial, viral and fungal infections, enhances liver function, helps detoxify the cells in the body, lowers cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood and even fights cancer.

Raw garlic cloves contain a high amount of a compound called alliin, as well as the enzyme alliinase. When garlic is crushed or diced, the alliin comes into contact with the alliinase enzyme and the compound allicin is formed. Cooked garlic is not nearly as therapeutic as fresh crushed or finely diced garlic.

### A VICTIM OF POOR PRESS

Recently, the safety of garlic for dogs has come into question. That's because one research study used a huge amount of garlic in their test dogs. When garlic is fed in very large amounts to dogs, it can cause oxidative damage to red blood cells, leading to a medical

situation called Heinz body anemia. Knowledge is a powerful thing, but astute pet owners should gather all the data about garlic before shunning this celebrated bulb.

Ironically, garlic is approved as a flavoring, spice or seasoning for use in pet food, yet the FDA has listed garlic in its poisonous plant database. That's because a study suggested that when garlic is fed in excessive quantities (5 grams of whole garlic per kilogram of the dog's body weight), it might cause damage to the red blood cells of dogs.

Considering the data presented in this study, the average 75 pound Golden Retriever would need to eat five full heads of garlic or about 75 cloves of garlic in each meal before there would be any adverse effect on the red blood cells. Similarly, a dog weighing mere 10 lbs would need to eat 25 grams of garlic - a bit less than an entire head of garlic, or about 8 to 10 large garlic cloves in every meal to experience any adverse effects.

## A HOST OF STUDIES PROVIDE EVIDENCE THAT THE ALLICIN IN GARLIC WORKS TO INHIBIT CANCER FORMATION. WITH CANCER BEING THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF DEATH IN DOGS IN THE UNITED STATES, LET'S ALL GET GOING WITH GARLIC!

How many dogs do you know who would either be given or would want to eat that many cloves of garlic? Drinking too much water can kill you, but we all drink water. In fact, we all know that drinking enough water is a healthy thing to do. So what's healthy and what's too much? It's obvious that all this "garlic is bad for your dog" hype has been taken totally out of context.

Furthermore, reported adverse affects from garlic add up to a total non-event over the past 22 years. The National Animal Supplement Council responsibly records both Adverse Events and Serious Adverse Events resulting from the use of natural products.

A Serious Adverse Event is defined as: "An Adverse Event with a transient incapacitating effect (i.e. rendering the animal unable to function normally for a short period of time, such as with a seizure) or non-transient (i.e. permanent) health effect." 900 million doses of garlic over a 22 year time span resulted in only two Serious Adverse Events and these episodes could very well have been due not to garlic, but to another ingredient in the mix. This proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that the risk of using garlic is so low that it's statistically insignificant.

### IT'S TIME TO RECONSIDER GARLIC

What is significant is all the positive research delineating the medicinal powers of garlic. Of all garlic's reputed benefits, perhaps the best known is its use as a natural antibiotic, with reports going back through history. In fact, Pasteur noted garlic's antibacterial

activity in 1958. Modern researchers have compared the effectiveness of garlic with that of antibiotics and have found that garlic has a broad spectrum antibacterial effect. Additionally, bacteria don't seem to build up a resistance to garlic as they do to many modern antibiotics.

But that's not all. Garlic increases the immune activity of Killer Cells (cells that seek out and kill invading bacteria and cancer cells). Uncooked garlic also helps lower blood triglycerides and cholesterol, making it useful for certain breeds (Schnauzers and Beagles) that are predisposed to this problem.

A 1988 study found that diallyl sulfide, a compound in garlic, prevented tumor formation in rats. Other studies have shown that garlic inhibits various forms of cancer growth in the body. Garlic also enhances overall liver function and triggers enzyme responses to help break down waste materials before they go into the bloodstream. In other words, garlic helps the liver out - and in today's toxic world, our dogs' livers need all the help they can get.

Additionally, garlic has been fed to dogs to help prevent flea infestations. There are many products on the market containing garlic for this very purpose. Both powdered and raw garlic are effective, although raw garlic has significantly more health benefits.

When using garlic as a flea preventive it's important to use a castile soap or detergent free shampoo. Dogs don't sweat as humans do and the garlic aroma comes out in the oil on their coat. It takes several weeks for the garlic compounds to build up in the oil and a detergent shampoo removes the oil so you're back to square one again.

### HOW TO PREPARE GARLIC

To release its medicinal properties, garlic first has to go through a chemical process so the allicin can be created. It's best to finely chop or crush the garlic clove, then wait a few minutes to allow the chemical reaction to occur. The healing allicin is unstable when exposed to air and heat, so don't wait more than 20 minutes before you top your dog's meal with some healthy raw garlic.

A host of studies provide evidence that the allicin in garlic works to inhibit cancer formation. With cancer being the number one cause of death in dogs in the United States, let's all get going with garlic! Buy a garlic press or simply chop some up. You can then mix it in with your dog's meal

While cooking garlic destroys allicin, other components in cooked or powdered garlic continue to provide some benefits to your dog's health. The cooked garlic will still function as an antioxidant and help flush toxins out. If you cook meals for your dog, it's totally fine to add garlic as a flavoring and for improved health.

It's no wonder garlic (*Allium sativum*) has been valued for thousands of years for its medicinal purposes. Five thousand year old Sanskrit and Chinese medical manuscripts describe the benefits of garlic. Today, garlic is grown all over the world and is making a strong comeback as a potent, effective, natural remedy. 🌿

*Since beginning her holistically oriented veterinary practice over 25 years ago, Dr Khalsa has been incorporating homeopathy, acupuncture, Chinese herbs, nutritional advice, allergy elimination techniques such as NAET and also JMT into her approach. Dr Khalsa is a Fellow and Professor of the British Institute of Homeopathy.*