



Give your horse a nettle-boost

by Jennie van der Byl

Nettle is commonly used for its nutritional benefits. It is highly palatable and has a sweetish taste once the stinging, toxic constituents have been neutralised by thoroughly drying or cooking the plant.

Botanical Name: *Urtica dioica*, *U. urens*

Habitat: Distributed throughout the world in wastelands and along roadsides.

Description: An erect plant with broad, lance-shaped leaves and toothed margins. The stems and leaves are covered with fine stinging hairs. Tiny flowers are borne in inconspicuous drooping clusters.

Composition: 100 g of the dried plant contains up to 30,4 g crude protein, 650 mg magnesium, 32,2 mg iron, 20,2 mg beta-carotene and 3,45 mg of potassium, along with an abundance of chlorophyll and vitamins A, C, D and B-complex, all in a highly bio-available form.

Parts used: Leaves and stems.

Primary medicinal activities: Nutritive, circulatory stimulant, mild diuretic, tonic, anti-anaemic, blood-cleansing and antihistamine.

Common uses: Nettle is excellent for improving blood quality, as it stimulates production of red-blood cells and helps the body to remove old

worn-out red blood cells and other impurities. It is rich in iron and vitamin C and therefore ideal for treating animals with anaemia.

Nettle is one of the primary circulatory stimulant herbs, which makes it useful for treating any disease where adequate circulation may be compromised such as laminitis, arthritis and lymphangitis. Combined with its mild diuretic property, it is useful for reducing windgalls and other soft swellings.

The plant's antihistamine properties make it an effective choice for treating skin allergies, internally and externally. However, the occasional sensitive animal may have an adverse reaction to nettle. It will manifest itself as fine raised bumps on the skin over large areas of the horses' body. The condition is temporary, usually resolving itself within 24 hours. Discontinue use immediately if an allergic reaction is noted.

Nettle is excellent for stimulating strong and healthy hoof-growth. It encourages dappling and

a shiny lustrous coat. Nettle can be made into a rinse for use as a final rinse after shampooing. Use on bays, blacks and chestnuts to bring out a shine and enrich the horse's natural coat colour. Make the rinse by brewing a strong tea. Leave to cool and strain out the herb.

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Daily dosage: 10-15 g of dried nettle for ponies and 20-30 g for horses. One medium-sized wilted nettle plant per horse.

Safety: Because the aerial parts of nettle have an extensive history of being used as a food, it is believed to be safe. Safety has not been established in pregnant animals. **SAH**

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