

# FLORA FAUNA NEWS

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## Mother Nature Knows Best



By Brian Kanke  
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Plants and wildlife are Mother Nature’s way of protecting her own. Bears, deer, elk, and various carnivores, as well as great apes, are known to consume medicinal plants apparently to self-medicate. Many animal species have created their own pharmacies from ingredients that commonly occur in nature. These animals eat things that make them feel better, or prevent disease, or kill parasites like flatworms, bacteria, and viruses, or just to aid in digestion. Even creatures with brains the size of pinheads somehow know to ingest certain plants or use them in unusual ways when they need them. Anyone who has seen a dog eat grass during a walk has witnessed self-medication. The dog probably has an upset stomach or a parasite. The grass helps them vomit up the problem or eliminate it with the feces.

The science of animal self-medication is called zoopharmacognosy, derived from the roots zoo (“animal”), pharma (“drug”), and gnosis (“knowing”). It’s not clear how much knowing or learning is involved, but many animals seem to have evolved an innate ability to detect the therapeutic constituents in plants. Although the evidence is entirely circumstantial, the examples are plentiful. The practice is spreading across the animal kingdom in sometimes surprising ways.

The scientists researching zoopharmacognosy are convinced that humans can learn from the animals, particularly in finding new medications.

If you have a topic or a question you would like addressed in the next newsletter please email us. We always appreciate pictures of the funny things animals will do. God Bless and Keep Animals Happy and Healthy!



### Did You Know?

- Reindeer eyeballs turn blue in winter to help them see at lower light levels.
- Cows can sleep standing up, but they can only dream lying down.
- The flamingo can only eat when its head is upside-down.

### Funny Facts

- Turtles can breathe through their butts.
- Pigs can run 11 miles per hour – that’s faster than a six-minute mile!
- Did you know the chicken is the closest living relative to the t-rex?

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