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## Homeopathic treatment for feline hyperesthesia: Case report

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**Abstract.** Feline Hyperesthesia, also known as rippling skin disease or rolling skin disease, is a neuromuscular disorder in cats characterized by abnormal behavior and increased skin sensitivity. Conventional treatment typically includes medication to reduce the frequency and severity of episodes. However, complementary therapies have shown potential as an effective alternative, especially given the side effects associated with conventional medications. Under this perspective, homeopathy has emerged as a significant therapeutic tool. This case report presents the homeopathic treatment of a 20-month-old cat diagnosed with Feline Hyperesthesia. The homeopathic medicines prescribed were *Apis mellifera*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Natrum muriaticum*, and *Staphysagria*, following the principles of pathogenetic similarity and the Law of Similars. After 30 days of treatment, the cat exhibited fewer, shorter episodes of hyperesthesia and, after 180 days, the animal was symptom-free. The patient remains asymptomatic, totaling 460 days without any episodes. This case highlights the potential of homeopathy as a therapeutic option for treating Feline Hyperesthesia.

**Keywords:** Complementary treatment, homeopathy, feline hyperesthesia syndrome

### *Tratamento homeopático para hiperestesia felina: Relato de caso*

**Resumo.** A hiperestesia felina, também conhecida como doença da pele ondulada ou doença da pele rolante, é um distúrbio neuromuscular em gatos caracterizado por comportamento anormal e aumento da sensibilidade dérmica. O tratamento convencional, geralmente, inclui medicamentos para reduzir a frequência e a gravidade dos episódios, podendo causar inúmeros efeitos colaterais e nem sempre contemplando a cura. No entanto, terapias complementares têm demonstrado potencial como uma alternativa eficaz, especialmente, devido aos efeitos colaterais associados à terapia de eleição. Sob essa perspectiva, a homeopatia surge como uma ferramenta terapêutica significativa. Este relato de caso apresenta o tratamento homeopático de uma gata com um ano e oito meses de idade, diagnosticado com hiperestesia felina. Os medicamentos homeopáticos prescritos foram *Apis mellifera*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Natrum muriaticum* e *Staphysagria*, de acordo com os princípios da lei dos semelhantes, sendo a similitude patogênica para isso. Após 30 dias de tratamento, a paciente apresentou episódios de hiperestesia em menor número e com menor duração e, após 180 dias, o animal estava livre dos sinais clínicos. A paciente permaneceu assintomático, totalizando 460 dias sem nenhum episódio até o momento da escrita desse artigo. Este caso destaca o potencial da homeopatia como uma opção terapêutica para tratar a Hiperestesia Felina, particularmente, em casos em que os tratamentos convencionais não são uma opção.

**Palavras-chave:** Homeopatia, síndrome de hiperestesia felina, tratamento complementar

## ***Tratamiento homeopático para la hiperestesia felina: Reporte de caso***

**Resumen.** La hiperestesia felina, también conocida como enfermedad de la piel ondulada o enfermedad de la piel ondulada, es un trastorno neuromuscular en gatos caracterizado por un comportamiento anormal y una mayor sensibilidad dérmica. El tratamiento convencional suele incluir medicamentos para reducir la frecuencia y gravedad de los episodios. Sin embargo, las terapias complementarias han demostrado potencial como alternativa eficaz, especialmente teniendo en cuenta los efectos secundarios asociados con los medicamentos convencionales. Desde esta perspectiva, la homeopatía se ha convertido en una importante herramienta terapéutica. Este reporte de caso presenta el tratamiento homeopático de un gato de 1 año y 8 meses de edad diagnosticado con hiperestesia felina. Los medicamentos homeopáticos prescritos fueron *Apis mellifera*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Natrum muriaticum* y *Staphysagria*, siguiendo los principios de la Ley de Semejanzas, siendo para ello la similitud patogénica. Tras 30 días de tratamiento, el paciente presentó menos y más cortos episodios de hiperestesia y, tras 180 días, el animal estaba asintomático. El paciente permanece asintomático, totalizando 460 días sin episodios al momento de escribir este artículo. Este caso resalta el potencial de la homeopatía como opción terapéutica para tratar la Hiperestesia Felina, particularmente en los casos en los que los tratamientos convencionales no son una opción.

**Palabras clave:** Tratamiento complementario, homeopatía, síndrome de hiperestesia Felina

### **Introduction**

Feline hyperesthesia syndrome (FHS) is considered a collection of symptoms and signs that suggest a painful and irritating disorder in domestic cats ([Ciribassi, 2009a](#); [Limier, 2009](#); [Tuttle, 1980](#)). It usually occurs in young animals and is accompanied by neurological signs and punctual behaviors ([Ciribassi, 2009b](#); [Viana et al., 2020](#)). It is characterized by involuntary muscle contractions and behavioral changes. This rare syndrome is often of unknown origin, with associated causes ranging from skin diseases, such as bacterial, fungal, and allergic dermatitis, to immune-mediated conditions. Central nervous system disorders and behavioral problems have also been implicated ([Viana et al., 2020](#)). Some experts propose that neurochemical imbalances may trigger this condition ([Ciribassi, 2009a](#); [Limier, 2009](#); [Tuttle, 1980](#)).

The diagnosis of Feline Hyperesthesia is generally based on a thorough clinical history and observation of signs and complaints of owners, in combination with the exclusion of other conditions that may present with similar symptoms, such as allergic dermatitis, parasites, and other behavioral disorders. A detailed patient history, physical examination, and laboratory tests are crucial for differential diagnosis ([Álvarez & Arias, 2021](#); [Amengual et al., 2016](#)). Treatment often targets the underlying cause when identifiable and is typically multifactorial. Commonly used medications include anticonvulsants and anxiolytics such as phenobarbital ([Ciribassi, 2009b](#); [Little, 2016](#); [Viana et al., 2020](#)), amitriptyline, and gabapentin ([Costa et al., 2021](#)). Behavioral therapies may also be employed ([Ciribassi, 2009a](#); [Limier, 2009](#); [Tuttle, 1980](#)).

Conventional medications commonly used to treat this disease should always be followed according to veterinary guidance. However, responses to conventional treatments can vary, and some patients may not respond adequately, experiencing adverse effects ([Landsberg et al., 2013](#); [Landsberg & Araujo, 2005](#)). In such cases, complementary therapies like homeopathy and acupuncture become valuable alternatives ([Bodey et al., 2016, 2017](#)). Therefore, complementary treatments such as homeopathy and acupuncture become important allies ([Bodey et al., 2017](#); [Costa et al., 2021](#)).

Homeopathy, practiced by physicians and veterinarians for over 200 years, has proven useful in treating various diseases, especially when conventional treatments lead to side effects or fail to improve the patient's quality of life ([Álvarez & Arias, 2021](#); [Valle et al., 2023](#); [Valle et al., 2015](#)). This case report aims to describe a feline patient with hyperesthesia that was refractory to conventional medications but showed significant improvement after treatment with homeopathy, highlighting its potential to enhance the quality of life in affected animals.

## Case report

A 1-year, 8-month-old spayed female mixed-breed cat ([Figure 1](#)) weighing 4.5 kg was presented at the NaturalPet Clinic in Brasilia, Brazil. The owner reported a history of hyperreflexia in the latissimus dorsi muscles, which began after the cat's spay surgery at seven months of age. The patient had previously been clinically diagnosed with Feline Hyperesthesia by another veterinarian. The patient had no prior history of conventional treatment, as the owner opted not to administer medications such as amitriptyline due to concerns about potential side effects in cats. Seeking an alternative treatment, the owner opted for complementary therapy through homeopathy. On physical examination, the patient was alert, had a good body condition, and had a calm temperament, allowing complete clinical manipulation. Vital signs, including mucous membrane color, capillary refill time (2 seconds), heart rate, and respiratory rate, were all within normal limits for the species and age. Based on the patient's clinical history, a homeopathic treatment protocol was initiated. The following medications were orally prescribed: (I) *Apis mellifera* 30CH and *Hypericum perforatum* 30CH, administered once daily (SID) for 30 days; (II) *Natrum muriaticum* 30CH, 5% alcohol, three drops orally (VO), SID for 30 days; and (III) *Staphysagria* 200CH X/5, administered orally (VO).



**Figure 1.** Female mixed-breed cat of case report

## Results

**Return I:** After 30 days of homeopathic treatment, the cat returned to the clinic for a follow-up. The owner reported that the patient had shown approximately 40% improvement, with fewer and shorter episodes of hyperesthesia. To further enhance the improvement, the treatment plan was continued for 60 days, with one modification: the formula for *Staphysagria* was adjusted from 200CH to *Staphysagria* 30CH.

**Return II:** After an additional 30 days (60 days of treatment), the cat returned for another follow-up. The owner reported a significant improvement, with only one hyperesthesia episode per week. Based on this progress, the treatment plan was simplified, retaining only the following formula: *Apis* 30CH, *Staphysagria* 30CH, and *Hypericum* 30CH, three drops orally (VO) once daily (SID) for 60 more days.

**Return III:** Over the next 90 days, the cat continued follow-up visits at 30-day intervals. During each visit, the owner reported a continuous and considerable improvement, with the cat exhibiting less discomfort and increased daily energy. The owner noted that the skin or muscle retraction episodes had entirely ceased by the final visit. At this point, 180 days after the initial veterinary appointment, the animal was discharged, as no further symptoms were observed.

**Return IV:** In a telephone follow-up with the owner, it was confirmed that the cat remained in perfect health, with no recurrence of muscle contraction episodes or any discomfort. As of this update, the patient has remained symptom-free for 460 days.

## Discussion

Feline Hyperesthesia Syndrome (FHS) is a condition that significantly impacts the well-being and quality of life of affected cats ([Álvarez & Arias, 2021](#); [Limier, 2009](#); [Tuttle, 1980](#)). Therefore, selecting an appropriate treatment is crucial to alleviate symptoms and restore the patient's quality of life ([Ciribassi, 2009a](#); [Viana et al., 2020](#)). Two primary treatment approaches exist: conventional therapy ([Costa et al., 2021](#)), which may lead to prolonged clinical signs and potential adverse effects without guaranteeing full recovery, and complementary therapies, which have become a valuable alternative in managing this condition ([Valle et al., 2023](#); [Valle et al., 2023](#)).

Homeopathy, first described by Samuel Hahnemann in 1796, has gained recognition, especially in managing chronic conditions, due to its lack of cumulative or adverse side effects. In cats with FHS may not respond adequately to conventional treatments for various reasons, including the complexity of the condition, behavioral factors, and the long-term side effects of certain medications ([Landsberg et al., 2013](#); [Landsberg & Araujo, 2005](#); [Landsberg & Ruehl, 1997](#); [Little, 2016](#)). For example, anticonvulsants

like gabapentin, which reduces neuronal hyperexcitability, can cause sedation and ataxia in some cats, while anxiolytics such as diazepam may result in excessive sedation and dependency over time.

In their study, [Valle et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that homeopathic treatments for FHS significantly reduced the frequency and intensity of episodes in treated patients, improving their quality of life and behavior.

Similarly, [Ciribassi \(2009b\)](#) observed notable reductions in behavioral abnormalities in cats treated with homeopathy, further supporting its efficacy in managing conditions like FHS. The present case aligns with existing literature, illustrating the success of complementary therapies in treating FHS and enhancing the patient's quality of life.

The selection of remedies in this case was based on Hahnemann's Law of Similars, following the principles of pathogenetic similarity outlined in French Homeopathy. Thus, *Apis mellifera*, *Natrum muriaticum*, and *Hypericum perforatum* were prescribed for continuous use, and *Staphysagria* was prescribed as a single dose.

These medicines were selected based on a thorough anamnesis and a detailed case assessment. *Apis mellifera* was indicated due to its efficacy in managing acute pain, particularly described as the sensation of hot needles on the skin. In contrast, *Hypericum* was prescribed for its known benefits in reducing sensitivity and excitability, particularly in the thoracolumbar and lumbosacral regions, where heightened sensitivity and pain were noted. *Staphysagria* was selected for its role in addressing skin sensitivity and nerve hypersensitivity. *Natrum muriaticum* was chosen for its relevance to the patient's mental state. Each remedy had a broad therapeutic scope, contributing to different aspects of the patient's condition while working synergistically to enhance overall efficacy.

Although further research is required to fully elucidate the mechanisms and efficacy of homeopathy in treating FHS, current clinical evidence suggests that it offers a promising alternative, particularly for animals unresponsive to conventional treatments. The individualization of homeopathic therapy and ongoing monitoring are essential for achieving optimal outcomes in such cases.

## Conclusion

This case report highlights the successful use of homeopathy in treating Feline Hyperesthesia Syndrome (FHS), a condition often unresponsive to conventional therapies. The selected remedies - *Apis mellifera*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Natrum muriaticum*, and *Staphysagria* - led to significant improvement, with a complete remission of symptoms observed over 180 days. The patient remained symptom-free for 460 days, demonstrating the long-term effectiveness of this approach without the side effects linked to conventional medications. This case supports homeopathy as a viable, safe alternative for managing FHS, especially in cases where conventional treatments are ineffective or poorly tolerated.

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