

## DEER VELVET / ELK ANTLER

**Common Names:** *elk antler, velvet antler, deer velvet*

**Scientific Names:** *Cervus nippon, Cervus elaphus*

**Effectiveness:** There is little evidence for use in osteoarthritis. More research would be needed in this area. Likely not effective for use in rheumatoid arthritis.

**Safety:** Possibly safe when used orally and at studied doses for up to 12 weeks.

### What is Deer Velvet?

- Deer velvet is the soft hair that covers the growing bone and cartilage that develops into deer antlers.
- The antlers are removed, dried, and ground into powder. This powder is used in medicines.

### What it is it used for in people with rheumatic conditions?

- Deer velvet has been used to reduce muscle aches and pains, improve the way the immune system works, and decrease inflammation.
- Deer velvet has also been used in people with osteoarthritis to reduce joint pain and improve function.

### How is it thought to work?

- It is thought to have healing and rejuvenating properties in traditional Chinese medicine.
- Deer velvet is made up of substances that may help cells grow and function (including amino acids, vitamin A, estradiol, sphingomyelin, prostaglandins, and epidermal growth factor).
- How deer velvet might work to treat rheumatic conditions is unknown.

### **Does it Work? What the Science Says:**

#### *Cervusen® 2 x 350mg:*

- A randomised, double blinded, placebo controlled study of 54 patients with osteoarthritis. Cervusen® 700mg for 6 months improved pain (~ 11 points on 100 point VAS), patient global assessment (~ 16 points) and WOMAC stiffness (~ 25 points) compared to baseline. There was no difference on the WOMAC questionnaire, version 3. Adverse effects were not reported.
- A small, reasonably well conducted study showed deer velvet may decrease pain, but not improve function, in patients with OA.

#### *Elk velvet antler 4x 250 mg:*

- A randomized, triple blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial of 168 patients with rheumatoid arthritis who had residual symptoms on DMARD therapy. Elk velvet antler 1000 mg for 6 months did not significantly change scores on the Arthritis Impact Measurement Scale (AIMS2), health assessment questionnaire (AHQ), tender/swollen joint counts or pain scale (VAS) compared with placebo. Although this was a well-designed study, it was underpowered and ~20% did not complete the study. Adverse effects were reported by 31% & 26% of patients in each group (details not reported).
- Small trial did not show benefit for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

### **What are possible side effects and what can I do about them?**

- It is unknown what side effects might occur with deer velvet.
- There were no specific side effects reported in short-term studies.

#### Interactions

#### **With drugs:**

- Deer velvet may act like the hormone estrogen. It likely should not be used with birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy.

**With Other Diseases:**

- Deer velvet may act like the hormone estrogen. It likely should not be used by women with hormone sensitive conditions or cancers (such as breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer).

*For more information about Deer Velvet, consult your physician and pharmacist.*