

Essential Oils for Poultry

Famo Flier

Antibiotics have traditionally been used in the poultry and livestock industries to both treat illness and as growth promotants at subtherapeutic levels. However, with the rise in concern over antibiotic use and resistance, the acceptability of antibiotic use has dwindled. In response, essential oils have grown in popularity as an alternative option to traditional medications. Essential oils are the aromatic compounds found in plants. Though research has yielded mixed results, overall, there is evidence that these compounds may display the following:

1. Simulate digestive enzymes
2. Improve gut health
3. Antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral
4. Anti-inflammatory
5. Antioxidant
6. Coccidiostat
7. Improve immunity

Unfortunately, the scientific community is quite divided on essential oils. There are thousands of different essential oils which makes research tedious and time consuming. It also means that some researchers may find great success while others see little to no benefit at all. With that said, there are some oils with a solid foundation of data to support their use:

- Cinnamon/Cinnamaldehyde – supports gut health, antimicrobial, feed efficiency.
- Thyme – supports gut health, antimicrobial, improved growth.
- Oregano/Origanum oil – Gut health and immune support

With these factors in mind, many feed manufacturers have chosen to use essential oil blends in their poultry products. This provides the best chances for success as the different oils complement one another's functions.

While essential oil compounds may never perform to the efficacy level of standard antibiotics, their ability to support poultry health is evident. Using essential oils in poultry diets is a fantastic strategy to support their health, performance, and well-being.

