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PRUSAKOVA A.A., MSc student

Scientific supervisor **KARTUNOVA A.I.**, Head of the Foreign Languages Department

EE «Vitebsk State Academy of Veterinary Medicine», Vitebsk, Republic of Belarus

PHYTOTHERAPY IN VETERINARY MEDICINE

Plants have been used around the world for medicinal purposes for as long as humans have existed. Many modern drugs find their origin in plants or fungi. Plants have been used for medicines because they have fitted the immediate personal need: they are accessible and inexpensive, they speak to those who have used them in their own language and they are not provided from a remote professional or government authorities. For these and other reasons, the use of plants for medicines around the world tends to exceed the use of modern synthetic drugs. Plants are increasingly appreciated in pharmaceutical research as a major resource for new medicines, and an ever-growing body of medical literature supports the clinical efficacy of herbal treatments.

The available published literature on phytochemistry (the chemistry of plants), and preclinical pharmacology of plant extracts grow at an astounding pace. Researchers have no doubt that nature is still the preeminent synthetic chemist and that in plants particularly, there are almost endless sources of useful chemical constituents. A lot of research has been done on many herbs, and they have been analyzed as to their active ingredients.

Artemisia species, which belong to the Asteraceae family, are perennial plants that grow in various regions of the world. Historically, this plant has been popular as a traditional herbal medicine for treating bleeding, asthma, circulation diseases, and digestive troubles in many countries. In recent years, the *Artemisia* species has gained increasing attention as a functional food ingredient for both humans and animals because it contains high amounts of bioactive compounds such as polyphenols, terpenoids, steroids, fiber, vitamins and minerals.

Wormwood is harvested immediately prior to or during flowering in the late summer. All the aerial portions (stem, leaves, and flowers) have medicinal uses. Wormwood is used either fresh or dried.

Wormwood may be taken as an infusion (a tea), as a tincture (an alcohol solution), or in pill form. Wormwood should be taken only under the supervision of a professional veterinarian.

The demand for herbal medicine in veterinary practice is growing rapidly. Extensive literature and medical material are available on the use, toxic effects, and incompatibility of many herbs in humans, but little research has been done on the safety of herbal combinations in animals, though livestock has been treated with herbs for many centuries.

The use of medical herbs in veterinary medicine is becoming more popular. Extensive research data are available on the effect of herbs, their therapeutic effect, or the perspective of their active components. One of the regarded candidates in natural products is *Artemisia absinthium*.