

Title: THE MANY USES OF DIATOMACEOUS EARTH
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Diatomaceous earth (DE) is an organic product mined in the west. It was formed from trillions of microscopic one-celled algae called diatoms, which wove tiny shells for themselves out of the silica they extracted from seawater.

As the diatoms died, these shells settled in deposits at the bottom of the ancient oceans. When these waters dried up and the seas receded, the deposits were fossilized and compressed into a soft, chalky rock which is surface mined and crushed into a powder looking much like flour.

DE particles are characterized by their irregular shapes, generally spiny structures and pitted surface area. They average only 5 to 20 microns in diameter, yet have a surface area several times greater than any mineral with the same particle size.

DE can be safely fed to animals or used as a dust or spray for parasite control. This action is strictly mechanical. The microscopically sharp edges of the product contact the offending organisms and pierce their protective covers. The parasites then dry out in a few hours and die.

What's it used for? Some uses for DE are:

- As a dust against fleas, lice and other external pests on dogs, cats and livestock. Use full strength as a talcum powder to rub into dog or cat coats. It can be sprinkled on pigs or added to dusting boxes for chickens.
- DE can be used as a dust or spray to control massed flies in pastures, in and around trees and shrubs, grounds and buildings and manure piles. Due to its fine powdery nature, DE is best applied at night when the air is calm. Dust on 15 to 40 pounds per acre (20 to 25 pounds in still air). For liquid spray, mix two pounds per gallon of water and agitate while using.
- When used on stored grains and seeds, DE can replace chemicals like malathion. The most effective protection is achieved if grain or seeds are treated immediately after harvest by lightly coating the outside of substantially all kernels or seeds with dust. This is best done by applying the powder directly as it is moved into storage. Use 4 oz. per 100 pounds. Barley, corn, buckwheat, oats, rye, rice, wheat, sorghum and mixtures of these grains may be treated in this manner.

- Dusting yards like pastures or animal enclosures can work against a wide variety of lawn pests. While spreading is suitable for grass areas, spraying should be used on shrubs or other plants.

To help the DE cling to plants, place a teaspoon of flax soap (available at many paint supply outlets) in a quart of warm water. Put 1/4 pound of DE in a 5-gallon sprayer, add the flax soap mixture and top off with water. Keep the solution agitated when using it.

To protect fruit trees, sprinkle a liberal amount of DE on the ground around the trunks. Also paint the trunks with a mixture of flax soap, DE and water. This protective buffer zone will impede the migration of various fruit tree flies and worms as well as Japanese beetles.

You may need to spread DE several times a year for continued control. Due to its shape, use approved masks and goggles to keep particles out of the nose and eyes, as the sharp edges can irritate the eyes and respiratory system.

Not harmful to earthworms

DE isn't harmful to earthworms, as they are structurally different from insects. Some earthworm farmers use DE in the bedding material to control parasites in it and in the worms.

For internal use, suggested feeding rates are 1 percent of weight of total dry ration or free choice for beef cattle; calves, 4 grams in morning milk; dairy cattle, same as beef cattle; chickens, 5 percent in feed; large dogs (over 55 pounds), 1 tablespoon per day; small dogs and cats, 1 teaspoon per day, adjusted for size; goats, 1 percent in grain; hogs, 2 percent by weight in feed ration; horses, 5 ounces (1 cup) in daily grain ration and sheep, 1 percent in ground grain.

Organic beef rancher Joel Salatin reports excellent results by using a free choice mixture of one part stocker salt, one part natural kelp and one-half part DE.

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