

An Essential Guide to Essential Oils for Dogs

(Because not everything shared online is safe, not everyone with a Facebook page is an expert)



I'm not being testy, but I am serious about the potential dangers of essential oils.

Please don't get me wrong—I love essential oils; and I do mean love them. I use them regularly for my family, dogs and horses. In fact, over the past couple of years I have found myself turning to oils as the first choice in my holistic remedy stash. They are effective, easily accessible and, with the right knowledge, they can be used safely. On the flip side, it seems like every time I scroll through Facebook I find yet another “recipe” for a “pet-safe” usage of essential oils—and sometimes it makes me want to scream because, for all the ways essential oils can be helpful, they can also be disastrous when used incorrectly. Some adverse reactions include ataxia, paresis, skin lesions, tremors, vomiting and worse.

Unfortunately, the misuse of holistic remedies is what gives holistic healthcare a bad rap. As a Certified Essential Oils Coach through the American Association of Drugless Practitioners, I implore anyone considering using essential oils to do their research and preferably to receive guidance by a reputable and qualified resource. Several years ago essential oils became the new Tupperware or MaryKay, and it seemed like everyone and their sister became an instant essential oils expert. Simultaneously,

over the last few years I have worked with many dogs who have suffered adverse reactions due to essential oils. This article will focus on using essential oils effectively and safely for dogs. Keep in mind that there are pros, cons and safety measures to be taken into consideration when using essential oils for all beings.

Brief mention of cats

The reason why I am taking up valuable word count real estate to mention cats is because many people have both cats and dogs or, like me, may have several of both. Whether essential oils are safe for cats is a controversial topic. Most people on either side of the discussion agree that high-phenol oils such as Clove, Oregano, Thyme and Wintergreen (to name a few of the most common) are a big no-no for felines because of how they are metabolized in the body. However, some advocates of essential oils have done the scientific research and found most oils to be safe when used properly. While my personal preference and decision is to not use or recommend essential oils for cats—if you walk away from this article thinking that Mittens could benefit from the healing that oils can provide, please visit the website of Dr. Melissa Shelton DVM at www.animalEO.info. Dr. Shelton has done extensive research

and has a plethora of information about using oils for cats on her site. Dr. Shelton doesn't even know I am recommending her, but I feel better knowing I have given this warning and shared her information. The last thing I want is anyone to take my canine advice and apply it to their kitty. Please don't do that.

Now let's get back to dogs

Essential oils are about as old as time. There are over 200 references to oils, incense, and ointments in the Bible. For centuries people have been using essential oils as a natural form of medicine. Oils are used to treat emotional, physical and spiritual afflictions. When using oils for dogs I recommend both aromatic and topical applications only. For you science-minded readers, when an oil is inhaled, the hair-like receptor cells of the olfactory, called cilia, send signals to the limbic system in the brain. I don't have enough word allotment to go into the complex details of the limbic system but I'll summarize it by saying the limbic system is tied to our emotional being and everything it entails, including but not limited to feelings, thought patterns, reactionary behaviors, memories, and more. When absorbed the oils quickly enter the body fluids and

mala type "beads" that absorb the oil—both you and your dog can benefit from holding the bracelet under your/their nose when waiting ringside or in the waiting room at the veterinary clinic. When diffusing oils in your home, I suggest starting out by using half the recommended drops for your water diffuser for the first few days. Diffusing oils in your grooming shop, dog building, home, or RV can be a very effective way of helping many dogs all at once.

When applied topically it is recommended that oils be diluted with a carrier oil. You will use roughly 1-5 drops of essential oil with each application—remember that less is more. Always start with 1 drop to ensure your dog tolerates the oil and, of course, smaller dogs need less. I begin by diluting oils by 80-90%, nearly 1 drop of carrier oil per 1 drop of essential oil. Organic virgin coconut oil is my go-to carrier oil, and I have also used olive oil. Dilution is necessary for small dogs, and even with medium and large breeds I recommend diluting with a carrier oil at least initially. If you have a medium or large breed dog and they tolerate the oil well, you can decrease the amount of dilution by 50% safely. Once diluted, oils can be applied to the pads of your dog's feet and



Essential oils are a natural compound found in plants, and therefore they resonate with the canine constitution innately. The healing elixir is extracted from the plant through one of two processes: either steam distillation or cold-pressed. Highly concentrated oils are then packaged in small amber glass bottles for distribution. Oils are divided into three grades: synthetic, food and therapeutic. I recommend using only therapeutic-grade essential oils. When purchasing oils please do your homework and look for high-quality, therapeutic-grade oils. I personally use Young Living products, but also have several Do-Terra products as well and find them interchangeable.



are distributed throughout the body systems where their chemical constituents can produce rapid healing. Something I have always found fascinating about oils is they begin working astonishingly fast—within 30 seconds! Essential oils can actually penetrate the membrane of cells to kill viruses and bacteria, something that antibiotics cannot even do.

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As I explained above, I recommend using aromatic and topical application when using oils for dogs. One of my favorite ways is to apply a few drops of a particular oil to a 100% pure organic cotton ball and tucking it in a dog's crate. This works especially well for show and performance dogs who spend time in their crates at classes and events, or for dogs who are traveling. You can also apply a few drops to an essential oils bracelet, these bracelets have

between their toes for universal distribution throughout the body or topically per the specifics of the condition. Please see the inserts below for reference. As an example, if your dog has kennel cough, you could use topical application via the pads of your dog's feet and still address the symptoms related to kennel cough as the healing properties of the oil will be carried throughout the body systems.

I'll admit I was resistant to essential oils when they began to make a resurgence. But I am now glad that I eventually bought into the hype and in time developed a passion for another form of plant-based healing. Hopefully by using the information provided in this article you, too, will experience the healing that essential oils can provide for your dog. Please always remember that this information is not a replacement for veterinary care. Always speak to your veterinarian regarding your dog's health before trying a new at-home healing application.

In the next issue we'll take a look at herbal remedies. I wish I could say I'm a little less alarmed by the misinformation being shared online about herbs and pets but, alas... I did say misinformation, so I guess I will have plenty to write about the next time.

Until then, be well!

“Cliff’s Notes” Version

A Must Read!



- Never apply an oil – diluted or not, to your dog’s eyes, mouth, or pour down the ear. Never add to your dog’s food/water
- If your dog doesn’t like an oil, don’t use it! In this case, your dog does know best.
- When using an oil for a chronic or persistent condition, take a break every two weeks, give the body at least one full week before resuming application. Overuse of an oil can create an allergy.
- Some dogs will eagerly choose their own oil! If you have narrowed down your choices, try opening the oil bottles and leaving them out for your dog to sniff, watch their reaction and see if they may be trying to tell you which oil they need. Like animals in the wild, even domestic dogs have an innate ability to seek out natural remedies and this includes essential oils.
- When using high-phenol oils such as Clove, Oregano, Thyme, Wintergreen, and others, less is more—dilute heavily and use in moderation
- Use aromatic or topical techniques when administering oils to dogs, never give internally.
- Go slowly, give your dog time to adapt to the oil. This means administering topically one time daily for a couple of days before gradually increasing the frequency and/or highly diluting the oil with a carrier oil. When diffusing use half the amount of recommended essential oil drops per the diffuser’s instructions for the first few days, dogs are sensitive enough that you may find the lower potency is still as effective (and the fewer drops you use, the less often you need to buy a new bottle!)
- Use ONLY therapeutic-grade essential oils.
- Essential oils are used to treat not prevent an illness/condition.
- Always be careful of your dog’s and your eyes and mucous membranes (just ask my husband about his unfortunate experience with Oregano back in the day.). If you do get oils in the eyes, flush with milk
- Use undiluted oils and essential oil blends under the direct guidance of an essential oils expert.
- Avoid using in puppies under 3 months of age, even diluted!
- Remember that dogs are MUCH more sensitive than people—less is more (broken record, I know).



Top Canine Friendly Essential Oils

Below is a list of popular, safe single essential oils for dogs. There are additional oils and oil blends that can also be used safely, but also many that are not safe regardless of application. If you plan to use an oil that is not on this list, please do thorough research and/or consult with a knowledgeable practitioner before using.

Cedarwood: arthritis, back pain, diuretic, fear aggression, healthy coat, kennel cough, lymphatic system

Frankincense: anxiety, colitis, inflammation, infections, insect and snake bites, scarring, tumors, warts

Helichrysum: broken bones, bleeding, digestion, liver health, nerve damage, wounds

Lavender: abscesses, anxiety, allergies, burns, conjunctivitis, inflammation, tumors, wounds

Lemon: anxiety, electrolyte balance, immunity, infections, lymphatic system

Melissa: anxiety, chronic cough, depression, flu, immunity

Oregano: bronchitis, infections, ringworm, staph

Peppermint: asthma, bronchitis, diarrhea, fever, heatstroke, inflammation, muscle pain, ulcers

Yarrow: allergies, bites, ear infections, quicked nail

Safe Essential Oils Recipes

Flea Repellent: In a 16oz spray bottle, add 4-6 drops of Rosemary and 4-6 drops of Purification; fill the remainder of the bottle with distilled water. Lightly spray dog, avoiding the eyes. Re-apply as needed for flea prevention.

Dental Issues: Add 8-10 drops of Thieves in a 2oz glass bottle, fill with Fractionated Coconut Oil. Apply to gums morning & night.

Kennel Cough: Combine 25 drops each of Raven, Lime, and Thyme into one bottle. Then add roughly ½ the recommended amount of drops to your water diffuser (if your diffuser suggests 5 drops, do 3 drops) – diffuse daily taking a few hours off each day. Place the diffuser on the opposite side of the room from the crate/kennel.



Jessica Montañez is the founder of The Holistic Being LLC. THB provides holistic and spiritual well-being services for animals and people. Jessica works with animals and people all across the world as they search for true health of mind, body and spirit. You can learn more about Jessica and her work at www.theholisticbeing.com.

