



How aromatherapy can help your dog.

Many dog lovers have concerns about the increasing use of prescription medications for their pets. While both effective and necessary in certain situations, these medications carry the same potential problems and contraindications as medications for humans. Many canine professionals and owners have discovered alternatives to using some medications. These include a change in diet, proper canine communication, and natural remedies such as herbs and aromatherapy.

Aromatherapy is the therapeutic inhalation and topical application of pure essential oils to restore or enhance health, beauty and well-being. Pure essential oils are highly concentrated – 200 pounds of lavender tops are distilled to make one pound of lavender essential oil – and so it is accepted practice to dilute essential oils before use to avoid problems such as skin irritation or overwhelming the sense of smell. This is especially important with remedies for dogs, because they have a more acute sense of smell than humans.

Diluting essential oils can be as simple as using a car or room diffuser, or placing one drop on a favorite bandana or blanket. Ready-to-use products are also available for purchase, but check all labels to be sure these products use pure essential oils, and not fragrance oils. Synthetic fragrances, such as peach, apple or strawberry, are not therapeutic, and can actually cause problems, such as headaches, agitation or allergic reactions.



Because dogs respond well to scent and touch, calming sprays and massage or grooming products containing pure essential oils, can be physically applied to create a bonding experience and potential behavior modification. This can provide comfort for dogs that are fretful during storms, fireworks, travel, competition, adoption, bath time, veterinary or kennel visits, and holidays. Be sure to introduce aromatherapy during a nonthreatening time to help associate the scent with comfort.

Essential oils such as lavender and orange can have a calming effect, while tangerine can help relieve malaise. Bergamot has been used for anxiety, and ginger for stomach upset. Plants historically used for respiratory and immune system health include frankincense, bay leaf, ravensara, lemon and thyme.



Because dogs love to smell things, aromatherapy is ideal for use with them. As with any home remedy, it is important to know the use and safety guidelines, and to recognize when it is time for professional help from your veterinarian.