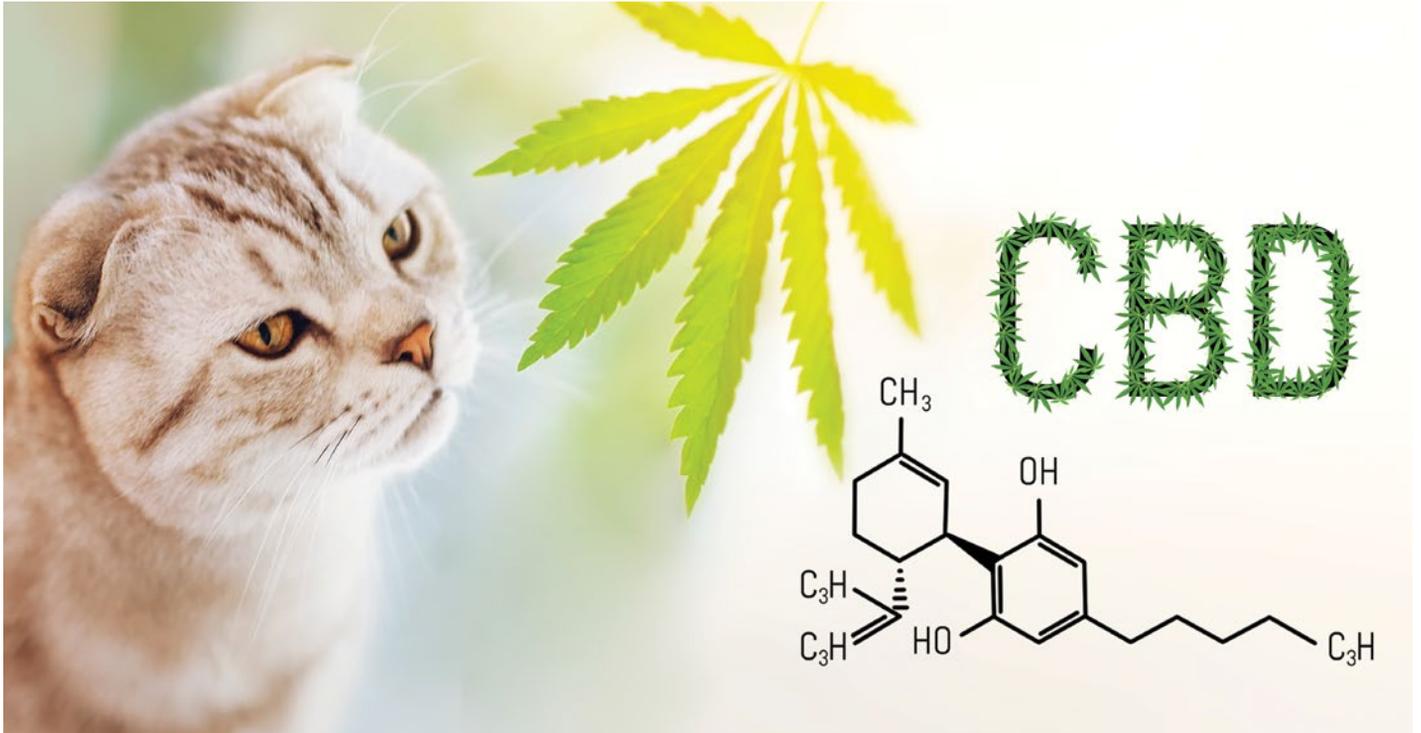


# What You Need to Know about Using CBD Oil with Pets

By Dr. Katie Woodley, BVSc, cVMA, GDVCHM



**Editor's Note:** The following information regarding CBD oil for pets is provided for informational purposes and to make PSI members more aware of a hot topic in the pet industry. You—and your clients—should always consult a trusted veterinarian before making any decisions regarding your pet's health.

As a holistic veterinarian, one of the most common questions I get from my pet parents is about CBD. There are constant news stories on how CBD cured seizures, cured cancer or helped someone's anxiety. Of course, hearing all these success stories will naturally make someone want to use it on their pets. So how does this translate over to our pet's health and helping their ailments?

## **Let's start at the beginning—what is CBD?**

Cannabidiol (CBD) is a naturally occurring compound found in the resinous flower of cannabis. There are about 100 cannabinoids present in the plant, and the two most common are the CBD and THC molecules. CBD is the non-psychoactive molecule, and THC is the psychoactive molecule that gives people their "high." The psychoactive effect from THC comes from the way it binds with receptors in the brain, which are known as endocannabinoids. CBD also interacts with these receptors but does not

directly bind with them, which is why you do not get "high" from CBD alone.

All mammals (any animals with a backbone) have an endocannabinoid system. This system plays a crucial role in regulating a broad range of physiological processes in the body. There are two receptors present that are affected by THC and CBD. CB1 receptors are present in the central nervous system. CB2 receptors are present in the peripheral nervous system, immune and lymphatic system. We can use different ratios of THC and CBD to affect different organ systems based on how they interact with these two different receptors, which is pretty amazing! The endocannabinoid system needs to be in balance, or in homeostasis, otherwise disease results.

Some of the common conditions CBD is being used for include chronic pain, anxiety, seizures and inflammation. We are finally starting to see research coming from univer-

sities on pets to show how CBD can help osteoarthritis and seizures. Unfortunately, due to federal law, veterinarians are still not allowed to prescribe or recommend it. In Colorado, for example, we can help with harm reduction, though, so if a client brings up CBD to the veterinarian, we can discuss it openly and honestly. So, make sure your vet knows if you are using it on your pet, and if they disagree or do not know enough, find someone who can help you!

***This brings me to how do you know what to use and how to use it?!***



There are so many products available commercially. In Colorado where I practice, the market is saturated with everyone making their own products. Also, I find that a lot of sellers are telling pet owners to dose their pets like they would for themselves, which is not correct and can create problems. In addition, there can be interactions with other medications. CBD is metabolized by the liver and it upregulates certain enzymes. When a human ingests an edible, the amount of THC present actually doubles due to the liver metabolism that occurs! The metabolism can be delayed, which means that person may not feel the effects until later and ingest another edible. Now they may have potentially ingested 4x the dose they wanted! Snooze time!

This is important to keep in mind for our pets, though. We are not using large doses of CBD, but they may be on drugs that are metabolized through the liver and there could be other adverse side effects. It is important to work with a veterinarian that can monitor what is happening and make the right adjustments to the amount of CBD being used and even other medication dosages.

Back to products: There are so many choices! So how do you pick a product that is quality and not going to harm your pet?



Once again, work with a veterinarian, but here are a few criteria that are important:

**Make sure the product is organic.** Just like with our food, there are a lot of pesticides being used. You do not want to be putting more chemicals into our pets. The cancer rate is already higher than it has ever been, and this is probably partly due to the amount of chemicals and pollution that we are exposed to every day.

**Don't go cheap.** Cheaper is definitely not better in this industry. The amount of times I have seen pet parents wasting money on products that did not have anywhere close to a therapeutic dose in the product is sad. Make sure that you know how much CBD is actually present in the product. The company should make it very easy to measure and calculate the amount needed for whatever condition is being treated.

**Check the company's certificate of analysis (CoA).** You should be able to obtain this information off the product or on the company's website. If you cannot find this information easily on the website, the company should be more than happy to provide it if you give them a phone call or email. This information will tell you how many cannabinoids are present, and include results from a residual solvent test, pesticide test and terpene profile.

**Buy the product as a tincture.** This form of the product is much easier to dose and adjust for animals and is usually more effective. You always want to start on the lower end of dosing for animals and you can work your way up to the therapeutic dosage to make sure your pet tolerates it. CBD is very safe for pets!

**Avoid isolates.** Choose "full spectrum" hemp-rich CBD products. Full spectrum means it includes a variety of cannabis compounds, including a small amount of THC (0.3% or less) in keeping with the legal definition of hemp. The cannabis compounds work synergistically in the body to provide the therapeutic effects you want. This is also what keeps herbal medicine more safe than conventional medication, because the natural compounds balance each other in the body.

CBD is a hot topic right now, but you shouldn't have to navigate this big world alone! There are veterinarians, like myself, who are knowledgeable and willing to help so you can help your pet achieve optimal health and well-being. There are so many natural options available for treating medical conditions, and I look forward to helping these become more available for pet parents so we can help our pets live longer and healthier lives. ■

# More on Using CBD Oil...

## A Professional Pet Sitter's Perspective



PSI member Russell Hartstein, CDBC, CPDT-KA, is the CEO of Fun Paw Care, a full-service pet-care company servicing Los Angeles, California. He's also a renowned behaviorist, trainer and nutritionist with more than 30 years' experience, including working with Dr. Jane Goodall.

He shared these thoughts on the use of CBD oil for pets:

"There are no peer-reviewed scientific studies done on CBD oil for pets. In fact, just recently the FDA sent warning letters to several manufacturers and companies about the potential dangers and harms of CBD oil and their marketing and advertising claims.

"The FDA said due to the 'lack of scientific information, it cannot conclude that CBD is generally recognized as safe.'

"That being said, I still take and give my pets CBD oil from selective, trusted companies and producers; and in moderate amounts. While there is no conclusive evidence of the efficacy and health benefits of CBD oil for pets, empirically, I have seen my pets calm down or relax after taking it (similar to L-theanine and valerian root)."

### A Word of Caution

Dr. Jim Carlson, a holistic veterinarian at Riverside Animal Clinic in McHenry, Illinois, says "the benefits far outweigh the risks of using CBD because it works directly with the body's own healing mechanisms by sparking the endocannabinoid centers of the body." He finds that pet parents are most interested in CBD for pain manage-

ment and anxiety problems in their pets and advises that it can be used as a cancer therapy and for diarrhea, inflammatory and autoimmune diseases.

But he offers a word of caution: "Something of importance I always fill my clients in on is that CBD has not been legalized in all states. The FDA has not approved the sale of CBD and has left it up to individual states. If you are traveling to a state that doesn't allow CBD, don't take it with you."

### Beyond Cats and Dogs...

While many reports center around the use of CBD for our canine and feline friends, Max Ucci, president Surgeon Fish CBD, shares that CBD for saltwater fish is entirely new—but that he finds it extremely useful.

Ucci, who has been in the saltwater-fish industry for a decade, explains that "stress is the biggest killer of newly imported saltwater fish. Stress also leads to disease in new fish which can then be transferred to your existing fish in an aquarium."

Because saltwater fish are easily stressed when first introducing them to an aquarium (especially if purchased online and mailed direct), he recommends a company called Healthy Fins that makes a new CBD product for stressed aquarium fish. It can be added to the diet of the new fish or added to the diet of your existing aquarium population. Ucci says that "CBD works wonders reducing stress in people, now it might just save the life of your newest prize aquarium fish." ■