

Is CBD Safe for Your Dog? Here's What the Science Says

As the list of claimed benefits of CBD (cannabidiol) for dogs continues to grow, my skeptical radar lights up. A few of the canine health claims for hemp-based CBD include helping with seizures, nausea, stress, anxiety, arthritis, back pain, stomach issues and cancer symptoms.



By Mark Robison

The fact is little research has been done on CBD for dogs – but what has been done is promising.

Anecdotally, we gave CBD to our bluetick coonhound mix named Sukha when traditional medications finally stopped working. It was no cure-all, but it seemed to help with her eating and general comfort in her last few months.

When pressed, our veterinarian mentions a brand of CBD-infused canine products called Therabis. It's currently part of a study being conducted at Penn Vet (the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine). Researchers there are working with up to 60 dogs suffering inflammation linked to osteoarthritis who are divided into three groups: one receiving Therabis' proprietary formulation of CBD, another getting pure cannabidiol, and the third a placebo.

As for published research on CBD and dogs (as of July 2019), two small studies have been done.

The first was done by Stephanie McGrath, a veterinary neurologist at Colorado State University. It looked at 16 dogs with epilepsy. Nearly 90 percent of them showed improvement with CBD compared with 20 percent who got a placebo. As McGrath says, these are "very exciting results" but she adds they should be taken with a grain of salt; she's engaged in a new CBD study looking at its effect on epilepsy and osteoarthritis, with more dogs this time.

Cornell University, which has one of the premier veterinary schools in the world, conducted the other study. It was done in collaboration with ElleVet Sciences and the pets were given ElleVet brand Mobility Chews during the double blind, placebo-controlled study. Again, the results were impressive, with the dogs showing "a significant decrease in pain and increase in activity with CBD oil. Veterinary assessment showed decreased pain during CBD treatment. ...

This pharmacokinetic and clinical study suggests that 2 mg/kg of CBD twice daily can help increase comfort and activity in dogs with OA [osteoarthritis]."

The shortcomings with this latter study are that it involved only 16 dogs and the dogs were allowed to continue whatever other treatments they were already getting. Still, the results were "significant."

More research is needed, even beyond the ones currently in the pipeline. Best dosages, modes of delivery (such as tincture, pills, or edibles), and frequencies have not yet been determined –



people tend to simply use human criteria for dogs, adjusted by weight. And there are no studies of long-term use.

Probably the biggest caveat is that the industry is not well established or regulated; this means the public cannot (yet) trust that many products contain what manufacturers say they contain. That said, bigger companies – such as Therabis and ElleVet – should be more trustworthy because of their sizable investments and desire to maintain good reputations.

If you have a pet with a condition serious enough for you to consider CBD, you've probably got a vet visit scheduled anyway. Ask your vet about it. There may be conventional treatments that are worth trying first. Or, if CBD is an option, your vet may have a brand to recommend and suggestions on what and how much to try first.

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