

# CBD for pets: Your FAQs answered

**CBD has become a buzzword in the world of pet health, with an increasing number of pet parents turning to this natural compound to help manage a range of conditions, from anxiety to chronic pain.**

As research into CBD grows, it's important for veterinarians and pet parents to understand the potential benefits and side effects of using CBD for pets. Let's explore recent research findings and answer some frequently asked questions about CBD for pets, including its benefits, effectiveness, dosage, and suitability for different types of pets.

## What benefits can CBD offer pets?

CBD offers a range of potential benefits for pets, including:

- Reducing anxiety
- Reducing inflammation
- Managing pain
- Minimising nausea
- Stimulating appetite
- Reducing seizure activity
- Managing skin conditions, such as atopic dermatitis
- Protecting cognitive function

## How effective is CBD for pets?

Research into medicinal cannabis use in veterinary medicine is increasing, with evidence indicating its benefits in areas such as pain relief, osteoarthritis, epilepsy and skin conditions.

A recent study reported that 60 per cent of dog owners in the US have given their dogs CBD products. The study found that:

- 64 per cent reported it helped reduce pain
- 50 per cent said it aided with sleep
- 49 per cent found it reduced anxiety
- 30 per cent reported it decreased convulsions.

## What's the difference between CBD and hemp products?

CBD, short for cannabidiol, is a naturally occurring cannabinoid found in the flowers, leaves and stalks of the cannabis plant. CBD oil is made by extracting the compound from the cannabis plant and combining it with a carrier oil.

In contrast, hemp seed oil comes from the seeds of the cannabis plant. It's rich in essential fatty acids and known for its nutritional value. You'll often find it in pet foods and supplements.

CBD offers therapeutic benefits due to its interaction with our endocannabinoid system – a complex cell-signalling system

found in mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and more. Hemp seed oil does not contain CBD and doesn't have the same therapeutic impact as CBD.

CBD is one of many cannabinoids found within the cannabis plant. Another well-known cannabinoid is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which produces psychoactive effects and can be harmful to pets. CBD has no psychoactive properties and presents few side effects in pets, which can usually be managed by finding the right dose through titration.

## What should you consider when mixing CBD with other medications?

CBD and cannabinoids are metabolised through the CYP450 system and inhibit some of these enzymes, potentially leading to the need for dose adjustments.

Some medications might interact with CBD, including:

- **Benzodiazepines:** May amplify the effects causing symptoms similar to THC intoxication. Animals may seem extremely lethargic. A significant decrease – at least 25 per cent – is recommended in either the medicinal cannabis product or benzodiazepine.
- **Gabapentin, Acepromazine, Tramadol, Phenobarbital:** May lead to temporary lethargy, inappetence, abnormal behaviours, and in severe cases, uncontrolled urination. Titration is best for the small percentage of animals that may experience these symptoms.
- **Trazodone (and other SSRIs):** There's a potential risk of serotonin syndrome, although it's not well documented.

## What's the advised dosage and method for introducing CBD?

Begin with a small CBD dose and increase gradually. It is recommended with any medicinal cannabis product to start low and go slow. Keep in mind that using higher doses can increase the chance of potential side effects, which are usually limited to diarrhoea or sleepiness and not common.

CBD also follows a biphasic dose curve, so starting too high a dose can potentially result in missing the optimal dose or sweet spot, reduced efficacy and unnecessary cost. Typically, CBD starts to act within 35–45 minutes, reaches T-max at two

hours and has a 4–6 hour half life, so side effects are usually transient and resolved by reducing the dosage.

### Which CBD formulation suits pets best?

The best formulation largely depends on each individual pet because of varying sizes and indications. Combined formulations (full or broad spectrum oils) might offer greater results due to what's known as the entourage effect. Researchers believe that different elements of the cannabis plant work together, in synergy, to enhance each other's effects, creating a more powerful overall effect. In Australia, veterinarians can prescribe Schedule 4 medicinal cannabis products, meaning they must contain a minimum of 98 per cent CBD and no more than 2 per cent other parts of the cannabis plant.

### PetCann CBD oil formulation options include:

**CBD isolate:** 99.99 per cent CBD

**CBD broad spectrum:** 98 per cent CBD, 2 per cent other cannabinoids (excluding THC)

**CBD full spectrum:** 98 per cent CBD, 2 per cent other cannabinoids (including 1 per cent THC)

Some species and individuals may be more susceptible to THC, so consider each pet's tolerance and potential susceptibility before prescribing.

### Can cats benefit from CBD?

Cats and other pets can benefit from CBD due to its interaction with the endocannabinoid system, which is common to all mammals. Cats may require a slightly higher dose than dogs because of how the feline metabolism functions, but this depends on each patient.

CBD offers many potential benefits for cats, including:

- Managing chronic pain, especially for cats with arthritis and mobility issues
- Managing chronic inflammatory diseases, including inflammatory bowel disease and feline urinary diseases
- Reducing the frequency and intensity of seizures
- Reducing the symptoms of cognitive dysfunction
- Reducing nausea and improving appetite
- Easing the severity of mood-related diseases, such as anxiety
- Improving behavioural issues, such as inappropriate urine spraying outside the litter tray.

### References:

- 1 Annual Review of Animal Biosciences Scientific Validation of Cannabidiol for Management of Dog and Cat Diseases Isabella Corsato Alvarenga,<sup>1</sup> Kiran S. Panickar,<sup>2</sup> Hannah Hess,<sup>1</sup> and Stephanie McGrath<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup>Department of Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA; email: stephanie.mcgrath@colostate.edu <sup>2</sup>Science & Technology Center, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc., Topeka, Kansas, US
- 2 <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-animal-081122-070236>
- 3 Divin D, Gorn  z Samblas M, Kuttiyarthu Veetil N, et al. Cannabinoid receptor 2 evolutionary gene loss makes parrots more susceptible to neuroinflammation. *Proc Biol Sci.* 2022;289(1988):20221941. doi:10.1098/rspb.2022.1941
- 4 Chiurchi   V, van der Stelt M, Centonze D, Maccarrone M. The endocannabinoid system and its therapeutic exploitation in multiple sclerosis: clues for other neuroinflammatory diseases. *Prog Neurobiol.* 2018;160:82–100. doi:10.1016/j.pneurobio.2017.10.007