

Are Essential Oils the Answer for Your Pet?

There's a line of essential oils created specifically for animals, and you might be surprised to learn the many ways in which oils can benefit your pet — and you — both physically and emotionally.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dr. Melissa Shelton is the official veterinary authority on the use of essential oils for animals
- She has developed a line of oils called animalEO®; by 2016, she has expanded the number of blends she offers to more than 50
- Essential oils act not only to help heal physical ailments, but also emotional stress. They benefit both pet and pet owner

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Today Dr. Melissa Shelton, a holistic veterinarian in Howard Lake, Minnesota, talks about the advantages of using essential oils created specifically for pets. Dr. Shelton is also the owner and founder of animalEO Essential Oils.

animalEO® was founded in 2015, and Dr. Shelton is now focusing exclusively on essential oils for animals. Her 5,000-square foot facility houses her blending and bottling operations. It will also contain a small veterinary space where she'll conduct research.

Dr. Shelton has doubled her line of essential oils, producing over 50 different blends. She creates them for specific conditions based on, for example, questions to her [Facebook](#) page from pet owners.

Dr. Shelton says animalEO has such a diversified product line that there's something she can recommend for almost every inquiry she receives from pet owners.

Essential Oils for Retired Entertainment Elephants

One of Dr. Shelton's current clients is an elephant rescue organization in Brazil called [Global Sanctuary for Elephants](#). This wonderful group has taken in animals from South America, where the use of elephants for entertainment purposes has been banned.

The organization contacted Dr. Shelton to see if she could help with foot problems the elephants are having as the result of standing on concrete for most of their lives. Foot rot is a common condition, along with toenail issues and pain.

Elephants are highly intelligent creatures and quite sensitive to odors, so Dr. Shelton put together a care package of essential oils and sent it to Brazil.

She's receiving pictures back from the rescue organization of the elephants sniffing the essential oils and responding positively to various scents, which is very gratifying.



The rescue workers are proceeding very slowly with the elephants and are still in the process of training them to lift their feet to receive the essential oil sprays, so Dr. Shelton doesn't have any information just yet on how the products are working.

Essential Oils: Good for Body and Mind

The really wonderful thing about essential oils is not only do they heal physical ailments, but they also heal on an emotional level. As Dr. Shelton explains:

"It's so incredibly holistic, which is why essential oils became my passion. You're never just addressing a physical issue."

Pet owners often tell her they are being helped right along with their pet by just applying the essential oils to their animal. For example, a cat guardian who applies a blend to her arthritic cat notices that her own arthritic hands feel better.

Dr. Shelton gets lots of requests for essential oils to help calm anxious pets, for example, dogs adopted from shelters. She's also making donations of essential oils when possible to shelters to help calm the animals in their care. According to Dr. Shelton, shelter workers who wear the oils can have a calming effect on the animals they handle (in addition to themselves).

Another area where essential oils can be helpful is with behavior problems, although Dr. Shelton is careful to point out that oils are only one prong in a multi-pronged approach to dealing with behavior issues. It's not a quick fix, but can work in conjunction with behavior modification training and other strategies.

What oils most definitely do is improve the mental acuity of animals who need to be trained in new ways of behaving, while simultaneously having a positive effect on their owners.

The Proper Application of Essential Oils

Not all essential oils have a pleasant smell. Valerian smells like "dirty, rotten feet" according to Dr. Shelton, which is actually an improvement over valerian oil from China that smells like anal glands! Essential oils can be vaporized into the air or applied topically. Some oils can be given orally, but Dr. Shelton feels oral application (in capsule form) has become overused to the point where gastrointestinal tract damage has occurred.

Even injections of essential oil have become popular, which is a very disturbing trend. Dr. Shelton hopes through animalEO she can help educate people as to the proper use of essential oils, and which applications are likely to do more harm than good.

People who can't afford an essential oil diffuser can use a glass spray bottle with a mixture of oil and pure water. In many shelters, workers use the spray bottle method to mist oils onto dog beds and toys.
