

Could This Natural Solution Revolutionize Pet Care?

In the quest for safer, natural alternatives for pet health, one compound stands out with promising early results.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- CBD is the nonpsychoactive cannabinoid found in the Cannabis sativa plant
- While CBD is commonly used for reducing anxiety, relieving pain, controlling seizures and for a number of other health conditions in animals, the use of CBD for pets remains a relatively new area of study
- One study looking into the long-term safety of CBD found that dogs taking the supplement daily for 36 weeks didn't have any serious health problems
- Another study found even higher doses of CBD appeared safe for six months, although some dogs had loose stools
- The right amount of CBD for your pet depends on their size, age, health status and more; before giving CBD to your pet, it's a good idea to discuss it with your integrative veterinarian

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Supplements, food and treats containing cannabidiol (CBD) are becoming increasingly popular among pet owners looking for a natural health aid for their pets. CBD is the nonpsychoactive cannabinoid found in the Cannabis sativa plant and is also found in hemp plants.

Unlike tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found only in cannabis (marijuana), CBD does not produce any psychoactive effect, making it appealing for therapeutic use in animals and humans alike. In fact, Cannabis contains an impressive array of beneficial compounds, including 120 phytocannabinoids and at least 445 additional phytochemicals, such as terpenoids, flavonoids and sterols.¹

While CBD is commonly used for reducing anxiety, relieving pain, controlling seizures and for a number of other health conditions in animals, the use of CBD for pets remains a relatively new area of study. Researchers with the U.K.'s Waltham Petcare Science Institute are one of many companies setting out to determine if long-term cannabis-derived CBD usage is safe for pets, revealing encouraging results.²

CBD for 36 Weeks Appears Safe for Dogs

Aiming to fill in the gaps about whether it's safe and effective for dogs to consume CBD regularly, researchers split 40 dogs into two groups. One group of 20 dogs got CBD capsules every day at a dose of 4 milligrams (mg) per kilogram of their body weight for six months. The other 20 dogs got placebo capsules that didn't contain CBD.

The dogs' health was monitored at the start of the study and after 2, 4, 10, 18 and 26 weeks of taking the CBD or placebo, and then again after a four-week break. The researchers looked at the dogs' blood, urine and poop to measure the levels of CBD and checked their overall health, including doing regular vet exams and monitoring how well they seemed to feel each day.

Just over half of the dogs taking CBD had a temporary increase in a liver enzyme called alkaline phosphatase (ALP), but it wasn't linked to any health changes. A specific type of ALP, coming from the bone, increased as well, and these increases were closely linked, suggesting the rise in ALP might be partly because of the bone-related ALP.

Overall, however, the study showed that giving dogs CBD daily for 36 weeks didn't cause any health problems, suggesting it's a safe option for healthy dogs, longer term. The researchers noted, "This study provides evidence that a once-daily oral dose of 4 mg CBD/kg BW [body weight] is well tolerated in clinically healthy dogs for a duration of 6 months."³

What Dose of CBD Is Best?

The right amount of CBD for your pet depends on their size, age, health status and more. So, before giving CBD to your pet it's a good idea to discuss it with your integrative veterinarian or health care professional. A recent study by Colorado State University also tested different CBD doses in dogs over a period of 36 weeks, finding that even the higher dose appeared safe.⁴

The study involved 18 healthy adult beagles divided into three groups. Each group had six dogs that got either no CBD, 5 mg/kg of CBD or 10 mg/kg of CBD with their food every day for 36 weeks. The dogs that got the higher 10 mg/kg CBD dose got some loose stools, but other than that it appeared safe. All of the dogs taking CBD did have higher levels of the ALP enzyme in their blood.

"This study was important to show that dogs are able to tolerate doses generally much higher than what most of these brands are marketing towards," Breonna Kusick, neurology clinical trials manager at Colorado State University told Pet Food Industry. "However, it's important to note that these are all very healthy dogs, and the higher doses may not necessarily be as well-tolerated in dogs with any sort of illnesses or on any additional medications."⁵

While it appears safe for dogs to take CBD for at least 6 months, particularly at the lower dose of 5 mg/kg, it's a good idea to keep an eye on their liver enzymes with regular check-ups and bloodwork. "I think it's important for CBD-based pet supplement brands to continue reviewing new literature to stay on top of their own recommendations. I also think it's helpful for these brands to understand what to watch for (such as signs of liver stress) for pet parent education," Kusick said.⁶

CBD for Chronic Pain

As mentioned, the CBD dose that's right for your pet depends on your individual animal and the condition being treated. CBD oil is one of the safest long-term management strategies for chronic pain. It deserves a special mention, as research showed it significantly decreased pain and increased mobility in dogs with osteoarthritis, in part by reducing inflammation.⁷

Dr. Rob Silver, author of "Medical Marijuana and Your Pet," suggests lower doses of CBD are often effective for neuropathic pain while higher doses are typically required to alleviate discomfort in dogs with inflammatory conditions such as osteoarthritis.

Stephen Cital, co-founder of the Veterinary Cannabis Academy, recommends starting with 1 mg/kg to 2 mg/kg twice daily regardless of the source of the pain and titrating (adjusting the dose up or down) to achieve the desired effect. CBD can also be useful for anxiety in dogs as well as seizures, and it may have antitumor effects.

Choosing a high-quality product for your pet is crucial. Experts suggest asking for a Certificate of Analysis (CoA) from the manufacturer, which should include details about how strong the product is, what's in each dose, the ingredients and whether it has any harmful substances like mycotoxins, metals or pesticides; companies should be happy to show third-party testing.

Unfortunately, not all manufacturers give out this information, and some only share a part of it. There can be big differences in how well CBD products work and their strength, not just between different brands but also between different batches from the same brand. So, if you've tried a brand and weren't impressed, it might be worth looking into other brands and doing a bit more research into multimodal protocols.

Sources and References

^{1,2,3} [Front. Vet. Sci., 21 September 2022, Sec. Animal Nutrition and Metabolism, Volume 9 - 2022](#)

⁴ [J Vet Intern Med. 2023 Nov 27;38\(1\):326–335](#)

^{5,6} [Pet Food Industry February 6, 2024.](#)

⁷ [PAIN 161\(9\):p 2191-2202, September 2020](#)
