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## **CBD OIL IN PETS – MYTH, MYSTIQUE, AND POTENTIAL**

*Dr. Kathryn Junkins Sarpong*

There is a rapidly growing trend of giving pets CBD oil -a component of marijuana or hemp plants. Owners are giving it to their pets in the hope to reduce anxiety, pain, arthritis, seizures, and many other conditions. CBD is short for cannabidiol, the nonpsychotropic component of cannabis sativa (marijuana) plant. There are claims from distributors of CBD oil products that it helps with everything from arthritis to cancer.

What do we know? Where are good sources of CBD? Is CBD safe? Who regulates it?

There is relatively little scientific data on the use of CBD oil in domestic animals. Recently a study\* published in the Journal of American Veterinary Medicine examined CBD oil in dogs with epileptic seizures. CBD oil along with traditional medicine was effective at reducing the seizure frequency when compared to placebo. The liver enzyme SAP increased while giving CBD oil and the side effect of ataxia (dizziness when walking) was reported in a few dogs. No serious adverse events were attributed to CBD oil in this study. This gives hope that the compound could have medical use and a potentially reasonable safety profile.

The legal and regulatory status of CBD oil is not well defined. The FDA is conducting hearings in 2019 to consider if (and then how) products containing cannabis derived products can be sold without violating federal law. The 2018 Farm Bill removed hemp from the Controlled Substances Act but preserved the FDA's authority to regulate any cannabis-derived compounds. The only FDA approved CBD medication is an anti-seizure medication for humans. The legal status under federal law of CBD oil derived from the industrial hemp plant is unclear. Most states do not regulate CBD oil at all.

Animals possess an extreme sensitivity to THC – the psychoactive component in marijuana. Dogs can become ill on a small amount of THC and much of the available CBD oil is contaminated with THC. No regulatory body is checking the CBD oil sold for contaminants. Many distributors selling CBD infused dog treats or supplements do not test each batch for THC.

Many anecdotal stories exist of CBD oil helping with anxiety, pain, inflammation and arthritis. Unfortunately, since CBD oil was difficult to study legally in the United States, it is an arena of half-truths, rumors, and highly variable potency/ purity products. Veterinarians are prohibited from recommending CBD oil in most states. Few reliable resources exist that understand the complexities of animal's unique biology and response to CBD oil. Mostly, we do not know all the uses.

People choosing to give CBD oil to their pets should consider carefully the origin of the products. Companies selling CBD products for pets should be testing for THC contamination and be able to provide that testing data to consumers. Inform your veterinarian if you are giving CBD oil or any other supplement to your pet. Your veterinarian may be legally prevented from giving you dose advice or recommending a source of CBD oil – but needs to consider any drug interactions and changes in your pet's liver. The legal status on CBD oil changes frequently as we learn about the potential broad uses of this natural compound in our companion animals.



\*McGrath S Bartner L et al Randomized blinded controlled clinical trial to assess the effect of oral cannabidiol administration in addition to conventional antiepileptic treatment on seizure frequency in dogs with intractable idiopathic epilepsy. JAVMA 2019;254: 1301-1308