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Is cannabidiol (CBD) good for your dog?

By Gennaro Tomma, Published January 29, 2026

Over the last decade, thanks to changes in regulations, the market for CBD products has rapidly grown in the U.S. — but not only for humans. Pets are also part of this trend.

CBD, the common name for cannabidiol, is a compound derived from the cannabis plant. In the U.S., CBD derived from hemp was made legal in 2018, while marijuana, which contains more THC, the substance that gives its consumers a high, is still federally illegal but legal in some states.

Data from the National Animal Supplement Council reveal a dramatic growth in the use of CBD products among pets in the U.S. Units of hemp and hemp-derived compounds sold and certified by the association grew from around 25,000 in 2010 to about 274 million in 2022.

“It's definitely widespread,” says Holly Molinaro, Senior Animal Welfare Scientist at Animal Wellbeing Solutions. “People started using it in humans, and whatever we do with us, we love to do to our dogs and cats.”

CBD is believed to hold potential for treating many diseases and conditions in pets, ranging from arthritis to epilepsy and anxiety. But the science is still catching up, as researchers try to understand the potential benefits and whether CBD-derived products are safe for our four-legged friends.

“Definitely more research is needed,” says Maxwell Leung, founding director of Cannabis Analytics, Safety and Health Initiative at Arizona State University.

A cure for everything, or just hype?

There is at least some evidence for CBD supplements helping dogs with osteoarthritis, a common disease known to cause problems such as pain and inflammation.

Comfort and activity in dogs with this condition seemed to improve with twice-daily treatments of CBD oil in a 2018 study by researchers at Cornell University, Colorado State University, and Metzger Animal Hospital in Pennsylvania, and other studies have found similar results. Co-author Joseph Wakshlag, professor of nutrition and Sports Medicine at Cornell University, who also consults for a company that sells CBD products for pets, says the supplement is “well proven” for this condition in dogs, though Leung cautions that the mechanism and the ideal dosage remains a big question.

CBD also seems to have potential to mitigate seizures, and “it can be used in conjunction with other anti-seizure meds safely as well,” adds Wakshlag. The few studies on the subject suggest the supplements can work; Colorado State University has found some initially promising results, for example, and researchers there are enrolling dogs with epilepsy in an upcoming study to further explore this topic.

When it comes to dealing with anxiety, things get more complicated. “We're still trying to determine what the right dose is,” says Wakshlag.

Molinaro points out that many studies aimed at understanding the potential benefits of using CBD to treat anxiety and stress in dogs are surveys, asking owners to self-report what effects CBD seems to have on their dog.

“People are just so convinced that this stuff is working,” says Molinaro. “And so, you do have a lot of studies saying, ‘yeah, 85% of dogs showed a decrease in anxiety.’ But the methods to find that were just asking owners, ‘did you think your dog had a decrease in anxiety?’”

This method is not ideal for understanding CBD’s real effects because “we’re really bad at perceiving our dog’s emotions and we tend to anthropomorphize,” says Molinaro. This might cause confusion when trying to understand whether CBD is having an actual positive effect on a dog’s anxiety.

“That’s not saying that they’re not working,” Molinaro says. “I just don’t think there’s enough of those physiological studies to actually showcase that they actually have a positive effect or not.”

Safety first

But could it be dangerous to feed CBD to your furry friend?

In the U.S., CBD-derived products are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration except for Epidiolex, a drug used to treat some seizure disorders in humans.

“Because it’s not regulated, these companies basically can put whatever they want [inside CBD products],” says Molinaro. For example, a study that analyzed 29 veterinary hemp supplements commercially available over the counter showed that some of them contained lead, some didn’t have the right dosage, and about 40% were mislabeled in some way.

What’s more, like with any supplements, there can be side effects. “There’s a lack of research, but definitely there are safety considerations that also need to be studied further,” Leung says.

Molinaro, who approaches the topic with “open minded cautiousness,” thinks CBD “has the potential to have a lot of positive effects, but we just don’t know what negative effects it could have yet.”

More research to come

There’s still a wide range of potential uses for CBD for future research to explore.

Leung wants to further investigate the potential CBD could have in helping dogs going through an important life transition, such as retirement for service dogs or aging, both on a physical and psychological level.

CBD also seems to have potential in decrease the itching caused by allergic skin diseases, says Wakshlag. “I think we have a whole bunch of other neurologic conditions that we could be looking at it for.”

CBD also seems to make some chemotherapies “a little bit better,” says Wakshlag. “Maybe it becomes something you use with certain chemotherapies to really decrease toxic effect of a chemotherapy or improve a chemotherapy response.”

While dogs are the most studied non-human animals when it comes to CBD use, there’s fewer studies that have investigated the topic in cats, and even less in other species, such as horses.

“That’s very, very new stuff,” says Wakshlag, who is preparing CBD products to send to a 30-year-old polar bear suffering from musculoskeletal pain. Some zoos also use it for giraffes and lions, he adds. “Every species is going to be just a little bit different. So, there’s not enough time in my lifetime to get it all.”

Overall, for pet owners out there who want to feed their four-legged-friends CBD, the number one thing to do is “talk to your vet,” who can recommend a specific brand you can use to help your dog deal with problems such as arthritis, says Molinaro.

Questões:

- 1) Qual a fonte de CBD legalizada nos Estados Unidos em 2018?
O CBD medicinal nos EUA é extraído do cânhamo.
- 2) Quais doenças potenciais podem ser tratadas em animais de estimação com o uso do CBD?
Desde artrite até epilepsia e ansiedade.
- 3) O CBD possui evidência científica comprovada para tratamento de qual condição em cães, e em qual posologia?
Osteoartrite. Para isso recomenda-se o uso de óleo de CBD duas vezes ao dia.
- 4) Por que a pesquisa para tratamento da ansiedade em cães com CBD não foi confiável?
Os métodos usados para chegar a essa conclusão foram simplesmente perguntar aos donos: 'Você acha que seu cão teve uma diminuição na ansiedade?'
- 5) De acordo com um estudo da FDA americana, quais foram três maiores problemas de segurança encontrados nos 29 suplementos de cânhamo (fonte de CBD) testados?
Alguns produtos continham chumbo, alguns não tinham a dosagem correta e cerca de 40% estavam rotulados incorretamente de alguma forma.