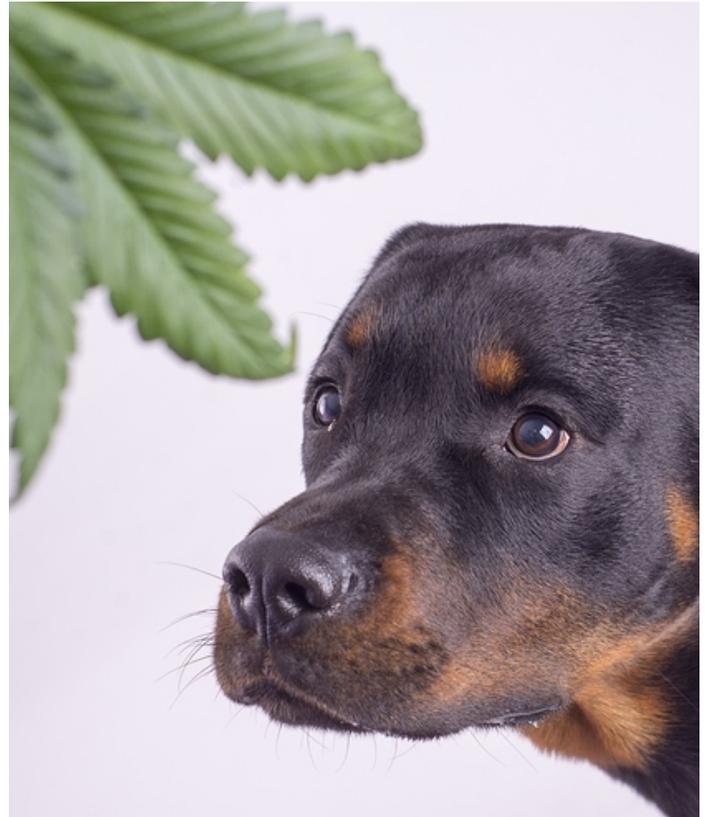


Animal Facts

Marijuana/Cannabis Use

It is likely that in 2018 marijuana will become legalized in Canada for people. This has the veterinary community concerned, because marijuana can potentially be toxic to companion animals, especially dogs.

Cannabis is believed to be one of the oldest domesticated crops, dating back more than 10,000 years to the beginnings of agriculture. Its medicinal use has been referenced in Chinese medical texts from 2700 BC. Throughout this long history of cannabis use, there has never been a single report of death in humans resulting from its use or abuse. However, since 2005, there have been 2 confirmed deaths in dogs that ate baked goods containing medical grade marijuana.



Cannabinoids are the active chemicals contained in hemp and marijuana plants. The most well-known cannabinoid is THC (delta -9-tetrahydrocannabinol), which is the psychoactive chemical in marijuana that makes it a recreational drug. Cannabidiol, or CBD, is the main component of medical marijuana, and current human research supports the long-suspected benefits of CBD in relieving chronic pain, decreasing seizure activity, and improving quality of life in patients with cancer, HIV, Multiple Sclerosis and other chronic health conditions. Dogs are much more sensitized to the effects of THC than people, which can make recreational marijuana dangerous to our canine companions. Hemp plants in Canada contain a maximum THC content of 0.3%, where marijuana plants can have 5-20% THC content.

Animal Facts

Marijuana/Cannabis Use

In the U.S., with an increase in use and acceptance of both medical and recreational cannabis, there has been a dramatic increase in reported cases of cannabis intoxication in companion animals. The Pet Poison Helpline has reported a 330% increase in calls over the last 5 years, 98% of those involving dogs. Edible forms of cannabis (brownies, cookies, etc.) can increase the risk of toxicity to dogs, as many contain chocolate, raisins, macadamia nuts, xylitol, or other drugs.

Signs of cannabis toxicity

in dogs include severe disorientation, tremors, twitching, vomiting, and urinary incontinence. Often dogs admitted to veterinary facilities with intoxication appear to be in an unresponsive, comatose state, and can be affected for several days.



It would seem that hemp oil, which contains CBD but not THC, would be a safe alternative for use in animals, and it can be obtained legally without a prescription. The main problem with **these products is that they are not regulated**, and studies in the U.S. of products that are marketed for animal use have shown widely variable CBD content, in some instances the products contained little to no CBD.

Although your veterinarian can treat for marijuana exposure, they are not authorized to prescribe any cannabis products for pets.

If you are considering using cannabis for your pet, talk to your veterinary team about safer options.