

Essential Oils and Animals: Which Essential Oils Are Toxic to Pets?

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Essential oils are huge right now — for people and for pets. But did you know that some are dangerous to animals? That’s right: Your favorite holistic remedies might be toxic for your dog or cat.

We’ve put together this guide on essential oils and animals so you can keep your four-legged friends happy and healthy! Let’s take a closer look at which essential oils are safe for pets and which are toxic.

What Are Essential Oils?

Essential oils are oils typically extracted from plants. They have a powerful fragrance (or “essence”) of that plant. They aren’t true oils in the chemical sense of being long chains of fatty acids. For instance, olive oil and olive essential oil are two different things. Rather, essential oils are derived from certain volatile compounds within a plant.

Essential oils are definitely having their moment right now as families all over the country trade in their chemical-heavy household products for them. Essential oil enthusiasts use these remedies for cleaning, relaxation, health and other reasons.

People love their pets, so putting essential oils and animals together is a logical next step for many folks who also love their oils and are seeking alternatives to other pet-cleaning or pampering products. After all, pet owners are usually generous people who love to share what they have with their furry family members.

Unfortunately, while many essential oils are beneficial for humans, they're often harmful to pets. This also applies to oils that you aren't placing directly on your pet. For instance, people frequently use essential oils with [diffusers](#), but even using an oil in a diffuser or a warmer can potentially make your animal sick!

What Is the Problem with Essential Oils and Animals?

Think of it this way: Essential oils are very powerful. If nothing else, they have a powerful smell, but more importantly their molecules tend to be highly reactive with the compounds in our own bodies, and in pets' bodies as well.

That's what makes essential oils so useful. If they didn't react with our bodies, they wouldn't have any effect. But this is also why many essential oils and animals do not mix. Many oils are basically poisonous or toxic, because their reactions mess up a pet's natural body chemistry. Human bodies can process a lot of weird stuff, but animals are often much more limited in what is safe for them.

Thus, when using any kind of essential oil, it is important to distinguish which oils can make your cat or dog sick.

Which Essential Oils Are Dangerous for Pets?

If you are considering using ANY essential oils in your home, in any way, contact your veterinarian first. There are so many different ways that essential oils and animals can interact without you realizing it.

Some essential oils are harmless, especially in small quantities. So it's not like you can never have essential oils and pets at the same time. (Looking at you, yoga pet moms.) There may even be some essential oils for pets that are safe in very small amounts. (Though we don't recommend it.) But in any case, always, always, *always* ask your veterinarian for approval before you use oils.

Essential Oils Harmful to Cats

Oils that are harmful to cats include, but are not limited to:

- Wintergreen
- Sweet birch
- Citrus (d-limonene)
- Pine

- Ylang ylang
- Peppermint
- Cinnamon
- Pennyroyal
- Clove
- Eucalyptus
- Tea tree (melaleuca)
- Thyme
- Oregano
- Lavender

Essential Oils Harmful to Dogs

Oils that are [harmful to dogs](#) include, but are not limited to:

- Cinnamon
- Citrus (d-limonene)
- Pennyroyal
- Peppermint
- Pine
- Sweet birch
- Tea tree (melaleuca)
- Wintergreen
- Ylang ylang
- Anise
- Clove
- Thyme
- Juniper
- Yarrow
- [Garlic](#)

What Are the Symptoms of Poisoning in Pets?

Generally speaking, essential oils and animals do not mix. But how can you tell if your critter is having a bad reaction?

There are several common symptoms of poisoning in pets. A good rule of thumb as a pet owner is to stay alert if you see any changes of behavior in your animal. Here are some other symptoms to watch out for:

- The smell of essential oils on their fur, skin, breath or vomit
- Difficulty breathing
- Drooling
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Difficulty walking or stumbling
- Muscle tremors
- Pawing at the mouth or face

- Redness or burns on their lips, tongue, skin or gums
- Vomiting

What Should I Do If My Pet Shows These Symptoms?

Essential oils and animals can be a harmful combination. Just like poisoning in humans, the key to reacting to poisoning in your pet is to act *fast*. Don't delay contacting a professional. Seek medical treatment immediately. Call your veterinarian, or contact the Pet Poison Helpline at (800) 213-6680.

If you can't reach your vet or their office is closed, bring your cat or dog to an animal emergency medical center. The sooner the better. Acting fast will improve your pet's prognosis!

Be sure to also follow these tips for essential oils and animals:

1. If the oil is on your pet's fur or skin, wash it off immediately.
2. Don't give your pet any treatments without a vet's approval.
3. Take the oil with you to the vet so they know what they're dealing with.

How to Keep Your Pet Safe

Michelson Found Animals doesn't recommend using any essential oils for pets, especially when it comes to direct application to an animal's body, or diffusing the oils into the air. And if you do wish to use some, only do so with a vet's approval. Our view on essential oils and animals is that they're likely to do more harm than good, so better to be safe than sorry.

To avoid poisoning, keep these oils out of reach of your pets. Store them in secure containers that your dog or cat cannot get to. And, again, ask your vet before you use ANY kind of oil in any capacity.

In particular, many folks use essential oils for a variety of reasons including cleaning. Instead of using oils, we recommend using a pet-friendly cleaner like [Mrs. Myers](#).

Essential oils are also commonly used as calming aids. An animal-friendly alternative is [Canna-Pet](#). This company offers soothers in several forms, including capsules, treats and liquids. These are helpful whenever your pet might be particularly stressed out, such as during fireworks, travel or trips to the vet.

We hope this look at essential oils and animals helps you out!