



FACT SHEET: PETS AND CANNABIS

WHAT IS CANNABIS?

Recreational and most medical cannabis products are prepared using Cannabis sativa L plants, usually by drying its flowers and leaves. More than 100 chemicals, known as cannabinoids, come from the cannabis plant. Cannabis is also known as marijuana.

Recreational cannabis, which is smoked, vaporized or baked into oral preparations for humans, contains high levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which causes psychoactive effects on the mind. This class of cannabis has the highest risk for pet toxicity.

Medical cannabis contains moderate to high levels of cannabidiol (CBD), a non-psychoactive cannabinoid compound, and lower levels of THC. These medicinal products may be prescribed to human patients for anti-nausea, pain relief and other medical reasons. Some of these products contain enough THC to produce toxicity in pets.

Cannabis that contains very low levels (less than 0.3 per cent) of THC in its flowers and leaves is classified as **hemp**. This tends to be most used for “medicinal” purposes for pets, with products including hemp oil, tincture or hemp powder. There’s currently little research regarding effective and safe dosages of hemp products in animals.



Your Source. Your Voice.



SIGNS OF CANNABIS TOXICITY

- Lack of balance and coordination
- Fatigue or weakness
- Excessive salivation
- Vomiting
- Dilated pupils
- Tremours or seizures
- Disorientation
- Slow heart rate
- Change in body temperature
- Sensitivity to light and sound
- Urinary incontinence

CAN MY VETERINARIAN PRESCRIBE CANNABIS PRODUCTS OR MEDICAL CANNABIS TO MY PET?

No. Veterinarians are not allowed to prescribe any of these products to pets. In addition, there are currently no CBD products approved by Health Canada and therefore no legal pathway for veterinarians to obtain these products.

IS CANNABIS SAFE FOR MY PET?

The safety and efficacy of these products is unknown. There’s also limited research on the use of these types of products in animals. Studies show that dogs have a higher sensitivity to cannabinoids than people, which puts them at risk. Cannabis of any type is not approved for use in animals, and giving products to your pet may have unknown side effects, unproven effectiveness and could result in a medical crisis.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK MY PET INGESTED CANNABIS?

Take your pet to a veterinary hospital immediately. Don’t be afraid to tell the veterinarian that your pet has accidentally ingested cannabis—symptoms are varied and omitting this information can make diagnosing and managing your pet’s case difficult. Remember, your veterinarian only has your pet’s health in mind.

With information from the College of Veterinarians of Ontario and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.