

Aromatherapy for frazzled Fidos

by Kim Bloomer, VND

With the holiday season upon us, your stress factor is probably higher than usual. Have you ever considered that your dog can also find this a stressful time of year? The hustle and bustle of festivities, shopping and guests, not to mention the addition of fireworks on New Year's Eve, can be more than a little hard on your canine companion's nerves.

A very effective way to help your dog combat seasonal stress is through aromatherapy. The essential oils used in aromatherapy were historically mankind's first medicine, and are still used today for helping bring a sense of peace and harmony to people and their pooches.

Emotional help from essential oils

High quality therapeutic grade essential oils work on an emotional as well as a physical level within the body. On an emotional level, properly distilled and extracted essential oils work in a way similar to flower essences; they help the body release negative energy, allowing it to return to a state of harmony.

Essential oils can also help improve physical wellbeing.

They are the plant's life force or Qi (pronounced "chee" in Chinese), similar to our blood, so they work synergistically within the body to maintain, repair, and renew.

Here are some of the best oils for relieving stress and anxiety in both people and dogs:

Anxiety

Lavender
Roman chamomile
Orange
Ylang ylang

Stress

Lavender
Chamomile
Marjoram
Rose
Sandalwood
Frankincense
Cedarwood.

Before buying any essential oils, make sure you know their source. This is very important. Many essential oils on the market today have been extracted using solvents that can be potentially harmful to your dog. This is an unregulated

industry, so just because a bottle is labeled "100% pure" that doesn't mean it's necessarily so. Before beginning your journey into aromatherapy, do your homework to make sure you're getting the highest grade quality of oils.

How can aromatherapy be applied?

First of all, keep in mind that dogs have a very strong sense of smell and are profoundly affected by aromatherapy. Go easy with essential oils. A little goes a long way. Allow your dog to adapt gently and over time. There are three distinct methods for using essential oils.

1. The British model emphasizes heavy dilution, using a carrier oil such as almond or olive oil. This method involves adding several drops of essential oil into several ounces of carrier oil before application.

2. The French model prefers applying essential oils "neat" or straight onto skin or fur without any dilution. Before using this method, make absolutely certain that you're using a therapeutic grade oil

What about cats?

Essential oils can be toxic to cats, especially if you are not using therapeutic grade products. If you have felines in your household, consider hydrosols rather than essential oils. Sometimes referred to as floral waters, hydrosols are created through the steam distillation of essential oils, and are much subtler and gentler in their effects.



Photo: Georgios Wollbrecht



Lavender

Chamomile

De-stress your dog (and yourself) with these oils

OILS

EFFECTS

Cedarwood	good for nervous tension, relaxing and calming
Chamomile	reduces stress, anxiety, anger and nervous tension
Clary sage	calming, relieves anger, anxiety, depression
Frankincense	relieves anxiety, anger and nervous tension
Geranium	reduces stress, relaxing and calming
Juniper berry	reduces anxiety and anger
Rose	eases depression, calming and relaxing
Sandalwood	relaxing, helps with depression
Sweet marjoram	reduces anxiety, anger, and nervous tension
Ylang ylang	relieves anxiety caused by stress, calming, relaxing and uplifting
Lavender	relieves stress, anger, anxiety, depression, nervous tension and exhaustion



that you know won't burn or otherwise harm your companion.

3. The German model uses diffusion to apply the oils. I've found the best way to do this is by using a cold air diffuser rather than heating the oil; that way, you maintain the oil's integrity and optimal effectiveness.

A cold air diffuser is my preferred method for de-stressing and making the entire house smell good. Many people have told me that their dogs will hang out nearby or even directly in front of the diffuser to get a good whiff of those healing and relaxing smells! Since the essential oils enter every cell of the body within a matter of minutes, the stress can be gone very fast.

The nice thing about using a cold air diffuser is you can mix some of the oils together to make a pleasant holiday fragrance that de-stresses while setting the scene for your festivities. The one I prefer for this time of year is frankincense. I mix it with orange oil and it not only smells delightful but just seems to melt away the stress. My dog also loves this combination – he hangs out in whatever room I place the diffuser in!

As enjoyable and exciting as the festive season is, there's no denying it can also be nerve-racking at times. When you or your dog start getting stressed out, reach for the essential oils and give the ages-old art of aromatherapy a try. It can help ensure a happy holiday for both you and your canine companion. 



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