

Pest repellents

that make “scents”

by Kim Bloomer, VND



Spring has sprung – and so have those fleas, ticks and other pesky pests that plague our canine companions. Your first reaction might be to pick up a new supply of topical insecticide, but don't do it.

Pests such as ticks often carry Lyme disease, yellow-spotted fever and other diseases, so of course you need to do your best to protect your dog from being bitten. But there's an old saying that the cure is worse than the bite, and when it comes to commercial insect control it's more than just a saying. Nature has a much better way of dealing with these

pests that won't harm our animals or the environment – aromatherapy.

There are a multitude of aromatherapy mixtures that can help combat fleas and ticks. Try the ones in this article, and after you gain some confidence and experience with aromatherapy, you will come up with a few of your own. Allow your dog to tell you which ones he likes best. You'll know what they are when he tries to take particular bottles of essential oil away from you, or rubs at the areas you test on yourself. Animals aren't subtle when they show they like something, and aromatherapy is no exception to the rule!

Hint

Pests evolve to resist topical pesticides; it's always better to fight nature with nature.

Rose geranium repellent

20 drops rose geranium essential oil

3 drops citronella essential oil (avoid this oil as well as basil, pennyroyal and cedar with pregnant animals)

Dash of bay leaf herbal tincture (this dissolves the essential oils since they don't mix with water; make sure the tincture is vegetable glycerin based or cider vinegar based. You can also alternate with black walnut tincture, which is a great insect repellent)

10 ounces water in a spray bottle (make sure you use a dark blue or dark amber bottle to protect the integrity of the oils)

From *The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care*, C.J. Puotinen, recipe created by herbalist Barbara Hall

Bugs away repellent

4 drops myrrh oil
(acts as a fixative and is also soothing and healing to the skin)

1 drop cassia oil

1 drop hyssop oil

4 drops rosemary oil

2 drops lemongrass oil

6 drops geranium oil

Dash of calendula or bay leaf tincture
(calendula is soothing and healing)

8 to 10 ounces pure water in a spray bottle

Hint

One of the best essential oils for repelling ticks and fleas is geranium oil. It doubles as a skin and coat conditioner, and it smells divine!

Love that lavender

One of my all time favorite essential oils is lavender. It's also one of the most versatile. Here are a few mixtures to use when making your pest control blends. Any of the above tinctures will dissolve the oils to make them mixable in water for spritzing your dog.

To repel fleas: lavender, peppermint, lemongrass, and spearmint

To repel ticks: lavender, lemongrass, sage, and thyme

To repel mosquitoes: lavender and lemongrass

Dilute in 8 to 10 ounces of pure water with the tincture of your choice in a dark amber or dark blue spray bottle. Or make a combination of these oils to repel all three of these bugs.

Enjoy a natural, pest-free spring and summer!

A caution for cats

Please be careful when using aromatherapy with your feline companions. Cats metabolize things differently than dogs so certain essential oils can be toxic to them, especially if they are used incorrectly or are high in phenols. Cats are even more sensitive to strong odors and smells than dogs, so always err on the side of caution. Try using hydrosols or a diluted herbal spray.

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