



The Natural Pet

By Heather Stergos

Many of us do not hesitate to use natural products, herbs, plants and other chemical free remedies on ourselves. There are several ways that we can provide our pets with the same healthy alternatives.

Aloe is a plant that provides relief for sunburn, rashes and other uncomfortable skin ailments that we humans encounter. This amazing plant can offer the same relief to dogs for a variety of skin issues. When using an aloe plant, snap off one of the leaves and rub the gel directly on to the dry skin, chapped nose, insect bite, etc. If using aloe already in gel form, simply apply a small amount to the skin. To make a shampoo for your dog using aloe, take 1 quart of water and add 1 cup of liquid castile soap, 1 cup of apple cider vinegar, 1/3 cup of glycerin and 2 tablespoons of aloe vera gel. For smaller dogs and puppies combine 1/2 cup water, 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar and a 1/4 cup liquid castile soap with the same amounts of glycerin and aloe. This can be used in a spray bottle or a cleaned-out condiment bottle works well to minimize waste. Aloe should not be ingested by dogs as it can be toxic, so keep an eye on those containers!

For those with cats, aloe can also be used to soothe but for cats it is best to use either aloe gel or an aloe spray. Aloe vera sap can cause vomiting in cats if he licks the area and ingests it, so only small amounts are necessary. If using a leaf, be sure to only use the internal gel and none of the liquid from the outer rind. For those with birds, aloe is somewhat of a “miracle” cure as it can treat many issues birds can run into including skin issues, cuts and sores, constipation, digestive issues and it can even stop bleeding in our feathered friends. Using aloe as a topical spray is the best way to treat skin issues in birds and will often help nip feather plucking caused by itchy

skin. Aloe can be used on rabbits, hamsters, gerbils as well, however guinea pigs have adverse reactions.

For natural flea remedies and prevention, pet owners have several options. Lemon spray is a very effective natural deterrent for many critters as the scent of citrus is overpowering to many. For a flea spray, cut a lemon into quarters and cover it completely with boiling water. Let it steep overnight and then pour into a spray bottle. Make sure to avoid your pet's eyes when spraying. A rosemary flea dip is also a healthy alternative for getting rid of those pesky, itchy critters. Steep two cups of fresh rosemary in boiling water for 30 minutes. Strain the liquid, throw away the remaining leaves and add up to a gallon of warm water (depending on the size of your pet). When the mixture is cooler, but still warm enough to be comfortable, pour over your dog until soaked and let it dry naturally.

Anxiety is an issue that both cat and dog owners face and there are a plethora of natural remedies to help both. Catnip can be very effective when used correctly. As a preventative, give to the cat 15-30 minutes before the anxiety producing situation (you are leaving, going to the vet, etc.). This gives the immediate energy increasing aspect of catnip time to work its way through before the stressful event occurs, leaving Fluffy calm and relaxed when it matters most. Valerian is also an option for reducing stress in cats and works similarly to catnip with the exception that after the hyperactivity passes, the cat is likely to sleep. Make sure to check dosage based on size, health and other specifics to your cat. Dried chamomile flowers are another effective option for reducing stress in cats.

For dogs, chamomile is also a very effective option and can be used by soaking a dog treat in chamomile tea. Cooked oatmeal added to your dog's food is another useful tool to calm dogs' nerves. Lemon balm can be used to calm excitability. Aromatherapy using essential oils such as bergamot and lavender are also helpful. For smaller dogs or dog's sensitive to essential oils, hydrosols are the best option.

Supporting a natural lifestyle is something that we can all include our pets in. Make sure to check with your vet before using herbs if your pet is on any medications or suffering from illness to avoid potential interactions. Keep them healthy and natural, safely!

References

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*The author's 3 pups Atticus, Maggie-Grace and Sophie. We use all of these remedies religiously with fantastic results.