

HUGO THE GREAT DANE can't make it through a thunderstorm without ingesting half a couch. The springs might slow him down, but not by much.

Becky the Springer Spaniel shrieks if she has to ride in the car longer than five minutes—which is problematic, since the family is moving across country and needs her calm for a six-day journey.

Mark the Beagle disgorges right before he has to strut his stuff for the judges at the dog show.

Owners could grit their collective teeth and try yet another round with the dog trainer and/or more drugs from the vet...or they could turn to holistic hope with aromatherapy. Defined as "the use of essential oils and other natural aromatic substances for psychological and physical therapeutic benefit," aromatherapy provides a whole new field for man's best friend to discover.

As a researcher in the field of cytology and a professional member of the National Association of Holistic Aromatherapists, Margo Park of Naples first turned to aromatherapy when traditional canine medicines fell short. Experimenting first on herself, she developed products specifically for her show dogs. More scientist and dog-lover than businesswoman, Margo says her Nature's Embrace Aromatherapy (www.naturesembracearomatherapy.net) began selling through word of mouth.

Recently, a breeder of Standard Poodles reluctantly contacted Park and described the problem of his prize Poodle with a mysterious rash that no vet had been able to cure. With sarcastic asides, he

grudgingly tried Park's Natural Shine Concentrate. After one treatment, 75 percent of the rash cleared up. After a second bath, the rash was gone completely. Mr. Poodle-Breeder ceased his criticisms and instead, ordered a case, post-haste.

Back to Hugo, the frantic Great Dane, and the thunderstorms: After Park used a combination of lavender and sweet orange essential oils, the remaining piece of couch was safe. More important, Hugo is now perfectly happy to weather the storm, calm as the proverbial cucumber. (At this writing, cucumber does not have any go-to essential oils—but if anyone wanted to try distilling one, it seems that Park could.)

Man's best friend, with his and/or her keen sense of smell, seems especially receptive to this noninvasive, noncaustic alternative to traditional Western medicine.

And the downside? According to Carol Gold, owner of Paws, Claws & Tails, the all-natural pet food and supply store in Bonita Springs, the American sensibility of "more is better" does not work when it comes to the highly concentrated essential oils. "Be patient. Baby steps are best," Gold says, suggesting that owners take clues from their dog's ensuing behavior to gauge how best to increase or decrease the treatment.

What exactly are these "essential oils"? Per www.aromaweb.com, essential oils are defined as "liquids that are generally distilled (most frequently by steam or water) from the leaves, stems, flowers, bark, roots, or other elements of a plant... [that] contain the true essence of the plant."

Though aromatherapy recipes can easily be found online, Gold believes it's better to leave the cooking to the experts unless the consumer

can follow those recipes to the exact drop. As far as purchasing products, both Gold and Park recommend that customers read labels closely, adhering strictly to organic essences. Anyone can claim a product is "healthy," but it's wise to stick with an essential oil, versus the bogus snake oil.

As humans wouldn't want to be sprayed directly in the face, neither would Fido. It's best to either spray the air surrounding the dog or, as Park recommends, the throat, withers, and front paws.

Mark the Beagle now gets a drop of pure peppermint on his tongue, and his days of revisiting his kibble are over. Becky the Spaniel loves her lavender and can't wait for the next cross-country trip. (An unexpected benefit: when her owners lose their way behind the wheel, the maps less reliable than their tempers, they've taken to spraying each other with lavender rather than invective. Mind the eyes, though.)

As Margo Park states, it's all about "using common sense." Correction, Margo: maybe you meant "common scents"?



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Scents & Scents-ability

By Kimberly Gadette

