



Stockup The Top 10 holistic remedies to keep in your home.

Everyone loves Top 10 lists. So in the spirit of enumeration, here are 10 holistic remedies and nutritional supplements that are must-haves for any canine-centric household.

1. Apis. When a bee stings, many owners reach for over-the-counter antihistamines. With a minor insect or bug bite, one homeopathic option is the remedy Apis, made from bee venom. As with any acute situation, consult with your vet before administering any drug or remedy, or if the situation is severe.

2. Apple-cider vinegar. This supermarket staple has been used for centuries as a daily tonic. You can add apple-cider (not white) vinegar to your dog's food or water daily; check with your vet to make sure your dog does not have a condition that might be aggravated by it, such as yeast infections or intestinal problems. Look for brands that contain "the mother"—a reference to the bacterial culture from the fermentation process—otherwise identifiable as little "floaties" in the bottle.

3. Arnica. Another homeopathic remedy, this one is for bruises, sprains, and trauma. Arnica is perfect for a dog who has overexerted herself in play, is recovering from surgery, or has pulled a muscle. The remedy works to move fluid such as blood and lymph away from injuries—dramatically, in some cases.

4. Calendula. Marigolds are pretty in the garden and helpful in the medicine cabinet. Calendula cream, sold at health-food stores, is a powerful healer. However, use it only on closed wounds that are starting to heal because its quick healing effect can trap infection inside weeping wounds.

5. Colostrum. Known as the "first milk," colostrum is rich in immunoglobulins and beneficial proteins such as growth factors. Some holistic veterinarians recommend bovine colostrum as a dietary supplement for dogs who need their immune systems bolstered.

Keep a jar of this benign white powder on hand for when your dog needs a little help marshalling her

body's healing forces, if she is battling an infection, for example, or recovering from chronic or acute illness.

6. Lavender. If you've only been using this sweet-smelling herb as an underwear drawer sachet, you've been missing out. Essential oil of lavender speeds healing and reduces scarring. Keep a bottle handy for applying to cuts and wounds.


Two caveats with any essential oil: Buy from a refiner who guarantees the oils are therapeutic grade, and always dilute essential oils in a carrier oil such as almond oil.

7. Milk thistle. A member of the sunflower family, milk thistle is a natural detoxifier that boosts liver function. This gentle herb is considered exceedingly safe, though not for use in pregnant animals.

8. Pumpkin. It's not just for pie. Full of fiber, plain, canned pumpkin is a great diarrhea remedy. Conversely, it also works for constipation. Just don't buy pumpkin-pie mix, which is loaded with sugar and spice and other things that might not be nice to a dog's digestive tract. Pumpkin is also good for dieting dogs who need a sense of fullness when their rations have been cut.

9. Rescue Remedy. This popular remedy is a preparation of five individual flower essences, gentle tinctures believed to operate on a vibrational level to balance emotions. Rescue Remedy is synonymous with trauma, and so is ideal for any event that involves suddenness and shock, from calming down from an unexpected fright to recuperating after surgery.

Sold in dropper bottles, Rescue Remedy can be added to drinking water, and is also available as a spray, which can be applied to your dog's muzzle or even paw pads where it will be absorbed.

10. Slippery elm. The bark of this native North American tree is believed to coat and lubricate the digestive tract, making it a gentle and safe herb for diarrhea and intestinal upset. It is available in capsules as well as tinctures. Consult your vet on dosing. 

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