



Murdoch
UNIVERSITY

Perth | Singapore | Dubai

The Clinical Use of Cannabis in Veterinary Medicine

By Sean Teo

An overview of the properties of cannabinoids and their potential therapeutic use in veterinary species

Marijuana or cannabis has been used by humans for both medicinal and recreational purposes for thousands of years. Studies about the medical benefits of marijuana have skyrocketed following the legalisation of cannabis in some states in America. As of today, the positive effects of cannabis on human health have been relatively well-documented. However, its use in veterinary medicine is currently still very unexplored and literature in this field is lacking. There has been a gradual change in the global mindset regarding the use of this plant, with an increasing amount of awareness from pet owners that are choosing naturopathic alternatives to conventional Western medicine. The fact that the Australian Federal Government has also legalised the import and sale of medical cannabis in 2017 has also sparked more hype around this topic. Consequently, this review aims to provide a brief overview on the properties of marijuana and summarise some of its uses and benefits in veterinary medicine.

Cannabis compounds exert their effects in the body by binding to two types of receptors present on body cells. Once bound to these receptors, cannabis is able to produce psychotropic effects, for which it is so notoriously known for, as well as bring about pain reduction, reduce cancer cells and minimise inflammation in the body. These effects have caused it to be used for treating cancer, nausea, pain, inappetance and inflammatory bowel disease and other ailments in humans. By extension, animals can be administered cannabis therapeutically. Some studies have shown that cannabis has produced similar benefits in rodents, dogs, cats, horses and rabbits.

At the moment, there are few veterinarians that are utilising cannabis therapeutically, but with further awareness of its medical benefits, it is highly likely that its use will become more prevalent. Hopefully, this study will shed more light on its properties and possible methods of use and provide a viable future alternative to conventional veterinary medicine.

1300 687 3624
murdoch.edu.au

