



OPTIMUM CHOICES, LLC
Healthy choices for people and pets

HealthyLife.Net Radio Show
Wendy's Animal Talk, Host Wendy Nan Rees
Guest Russell Louie

Safe Aromatherapy and My Pet
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Russell, tell us a little about your background and how you came upon all your knowledge regarding pets.

I have studied holistic health and spirituality for over 30 years and lived a holistic lifestyle for over 56 years. My education includes a degree in geophysical engineering and I am a Certified Reiki Master. I specialize in integrating my scientific background with my knowledge of holistic health to create wellness programs that promote optimum health for both people and pets. My greatest talent is being able to cut through all the marketing hype using my scientific background to tell people what is truly holistic. Most of my holistic knowledge about pets has come about through my experiences with our own pets and a desire to have our pets live to be 15-20 years old and still being healthy like pets used to 50 years ago.

What do you mean by safe aromatherapy?

First, let me explain what aromatherapy is not. Aromatherapy is not putting essential oils in lamp rings sitting on top of light bulbs. Aromatherapy is not burning essential oils in candles. Aromatherapy cannot be obtained by using plug-in devices in your electrical outlet. The reason is that 70–90% of the therapeutic properties of essential oils are destroyed by heat and all the above mentioned applications use heat to disperse essential oils. The previously mentioned techniques are good for fragrance but not serious aromatherapy.

So, in your opinion what is serious aromatherapy?

Aromatherapy has been around for over 5,000 years. There are over 175 text references in the Bible noting essential oil usage. During World War I & II, French doctors used essential oils for their antibacterial and wound-healing properties. In Europe today, only a trained and certified aromatherapist can administer essential oil treatments. Some European health insurance policies even pay for aromatherapy treatments. Now that is serious aromatherapy.

OK, now that I know what serious aromatherapy is, tell me what are essential oils?

Essential oils are the aromatic liquids found within a plant that contains the plant's DNA codes for healing, reproduction and protection. When a plant gets an infection from bacteria or fungus, it can't go to the doctor or drugstore but must heal itself. If a leaf or stem should break off, it must cauterize the wound and regenerate new cells to heal. A plant must manufacture scents to attract bees for reproduction and repel predators. For plants, essential oils serve the same role as our human blood. Essential oils are nature's medicine kit for plants.

So, how is Nature's medicine kit applicable to our domesticated animals?

Wild animals will instinctually seek out certain plants and eat them for the plant's healing properties. For instance, when bears exit their hibernation cycle in the spring they eat certain berries and plants to purge their bodies. When wild dogs, wolves, cats and horses are sick they seek out certain plants to eat in order to get well. I am sure you have observed cats eating grass then throwing up to clean out their digestive tract. As we domesticated animals, they lost most of this instinct and their access to wild plants. By giving essential oils to our pets when they are ill, we provide them access to nature's medicine chest.

If they are Nature's medicine chest, as you say, why is the title of our show today *Safe Aromatherapy and My Pet?*

Well, Wendy, just like all medicines one needs to respect their therapeutic potential and not give an inappropriate dosage for their smaller bodies. Just because something is all-natural, does not make it automatically safe for their bodies. Cats are extremely sensitive to essential oils and one must be careful not to use citrus oil on or around them.

So, how would I safely introduce essential oils to my animals?

It is important to introduce animals to essential oils with a positive experience. It is always best to let the animal smell the oil first before using, then watch for signs of acceptance such as wanting to lick the oil, rubbing against you or appearing wide-eye and bushy tailed. Signs the animal dislikes the oil are turning their head away, sneezing or snorting, panting, drooling, pacing and whining. If an animal is already fearful from people, loud noises such as thunderstorms or in pain or shock, that is not a good time to introduce a new essential oils because the connection of the new scent with the fearful experience will be imprinted on the animal. Always introduce the oil first when the animal is calm then later when the fearful event occurs you can bring the oil out again and remind your animal of its first calm experience with that scent.

How would I apply essential oils on my animals?

The easiest and safest application is to apply the essential oils around the animal's environment not on them. Remember, animals have a sense of smell 50-100 times stronger than humans. I like putting essential oils on cotton balls and leaving them around the room where animals frequent.

One can spray a dilution of essential oils on the animal's bedding for calm, peaceful sleep. If one is trained in animal aromatherapy, one can apply the oils directly to their paws and body. Never put essential oils on an animal's nose or snout. This takes away their freedom of choice and is intrusive in my opinion. If an animal doesn't like the scent, they can't wash it off themselves.

Can I use essential oils straight out of the bottle?

Most companion animals have considerably less body mass than an human adult, so I always use diluted essential oils. The rule-of-thumb I use for small animals is to start with a 3–4% dilution: that is 1 drop essential oil to 24 drops of carrier oil or 24 drops essential oil to one ounce carrier oil. The carrier oil can be any non-scented nut or vegetable oil used for massage such as sweet almond, sesame, jojoba or hazelnut oil. Of course, olive oil works too. For giant breed dogs, one can use a slightly stronger dilution, say 5-7%. Horses can tolerate a greater strength and sometimes even undiluted essential oils.

What essential oils can I use on my dog?

Essential oils can have a very profound effect on shelter, rescue and adopted dogs. They help the dog bond with the new owner after such a traumatic experience. I like lavender and chamomile oils for their calming effects. Try putting some diluted lavender oil on the back of your hand or a cotton ball in the room. Then affectionately pet or brush your dog to bond with it. Now the next time a stressful situation arises like a vet visit, car trip or thunderstorm, get out the diluted lavender oil and reinforce the bonding and calming experience. Lavender with a blend of valerian, vetiver, petitgrain, sweet marjoram or sweet orange are good for calming and relieving the stress for show dogs.

Like humans, lemongrass is good for cruciate ligaments and joint injuries. For arthritis a diluted anti-inflammatory blend of peppermint, cypress, juniper berry and lavender is good.

Tea tree oil, also known as melaleuca, is excellent for healing sores, insect bites and repelling insects.

For an insect repellent, one can use a mixture of 10 drops each of citronella, eucalyptus globulus and peppermint in an 8 ounce spray bottle with water. Remember to shake the bottle vigorously before each application since essential oils and water do not readily mix.

Another recipe from Sandra Topper, a trained aromatherapist in Canada, is 30 drops lavender, 20 drops geranium, 30 drops Tea Tree oil, and 16 drops of citronella oil with 4 ounces of water and one-half ounce of vodka. Mix this recipe in a spray bottle and shake before using as an insect and mosquito repellent.

Can I use the same essential oils on my cat?

Like I mentioned previously, one must be really cautious with cats. Cat's livers do not have the necessary enzymes to break down and excrete certain chemical compounds in essential oils. The chemical compounds, therefore, accumulate in a cat's body and are sometimes toxic to the point of death. Cats are very sensitive to "hot" spice oils containing phenols, such as oregano, thyme, cinnamon (cassia), clove, and savory. A second compound to avoid would be ketones that are found in sage oil. A third group to avoid are the monoterpene hydrocarbons of pinene and

limonene. These compounds are found in the citrus and pine oils, such as lemon, orange, tangerine, mandarin, grapefruit, lime, bergamot, pine, spruce, and any fir oil. That is why many anti-scratching remedies have citrus oils in them because cats instinctually don't like the scent.

Many household cleaners and even pet products have these latter substances in them to make them smell nice to the owners so be cautious. After using a product with citrus or pine scents it would be best to let the area dry and air out before a cat walks on the surface. Symptoms of a toxic buildup include being despondent, clumsy, uncoordinated, partially paralyzed, vomiting, drooling or in a daze. The diagnosis for toxic poisoning is a blood test that shows elevated liver enzymes. It is best to seek a veterinarian's care if toxic poisoning is suspected.

I like to keep things simple for cats and use just the gentler essential oils like lavender or chamomile for their calming effects and rose or geranium for their healing effects on the skin. For arthritis and joint problems, I prefer to use homeopaths instead of the stronger essential oils.

It sounds like one really needs to be cautious when using essential oils around cats?

This is certainly a subject for debate amongst aromatherapists. I don't think there is enough research yet to conclusively prove essential oils are totally safe for cats. So, I would rather err on the side of caution rather than take a chance of causing long-term liver damage to my cat. Many aromatherapist state that they have been using essential oils on their cats for years without any harmful effects. I think a more accurate statement would be they have used essential oils on their cats with many visible short-term benefits but the long-term side effects are still unknown. How does one know if each application of essential oil has decreased a cat's liver capacity by a minute 1-2% each application? Each person needs to make their own decision.

Do you use essential oils on your cats?

I prefer to use hydrosols on my cats rather than essential oils. Hydrosols are the by-products of essential oil distillation. Hydrosols are the distilled water that is left after the essential oils are filtered out from the distillation process. The safer compounds have an affinity for water and are safe for cats. The caustic compounds, such as the phenols and ketones, do not appear in hydrosols but stay in the essential oils themselves. There are no known case histories of hydrosols causing toxicity in cats. Hydrosols of chamomile and a combination of rose, lavender, geranium and neroli are known to have a calming effect on cats. Wounds can be cleaned with diluted lavender, rose, geranium, and chamomile oil or their hydrosols. Itching can be alleviated using witch hazel, rose, lavender or German chamomile.

If one chooses to use essential oils around cats, what precautions should one take?

We have a chart entitled Essential Oils to Avoid on Cats on our website www.OptimumChoices.com. Here are some rules that I would personally follow when using any of these oils:

1. If I use any of the oils in the charts on myself or around the house, I keep the cats away for at least one hour. I never diffuse in the air any of the oils in the charts or blends containing these

oils around cats. This is very important. When using a blend always look on the label for the individual essential oils it contains.

2. I never keep cats in an enclosed area when diffusing oils. I always keep a window open or put the cat in a different part of the house.

3. If I want to use essential oils on cats, I always use a highly diluted formula with essential oils. A 1% dilution would be one drop of essential oil to 99 drops of carrier oil. When in doubt I use hydrosols instead of essential oils on cats. Hydrosols are water-based, gentler and much easier to tolerate.

4. When using cleaning products with the above essential oils, especially citrus or pine, I keep the cats away and off the floor until it dries. I make sure I rinse and dry the surface as thoroughly as possible.

Can one use all essential oils on our pets?

That's a really good question. Since the early aromatherapy research was mostly done on horses and dogs there are more case studies for those species. Because of the resurgence in aromatherapy today, our other domestic animals such as cats, birds, hamsters, gerbils, etc. are now being exposed to essential oils and our volume of case histories is accumulating. Through my research I have found many cases of adverse reactions to essential oils among cats, birds and smaller animals. So, I think we need to separate aromatherapy on horses and dogs from aromatherapy on cats, birds and other smaller mammals.

Any other special steps you would take when using essential oils on animals?

In addition to the oils on our chart at our website, I would also avoid stimulating oils of peppermint, rosemary, melaleuca (Tea Tree), spearmint, ravensara and eucalyptus unless in highly diluted form. It is also recommended to avoid rosemary on dogs that are prone to seizures or with epilepsy. It is not recommended to use essential oils on medium to large breed puppies younger than eight weeks. For small or toy breed puppies wait at least until they are older than ten weeks. When in doubt use the gentler hydrosols (by-products of essential oil distillation) on puppies instead of essential oils.

Here are some more general rules for all animals:

1. It is best to avoid the "hot" spice oils such as oregano, thyme, cinnamon (cassia), clove, and savory. I know oil of Oregano is a very beneficial oil for humans to support bacterial infections, fungus, parasites and candida conditions but I would use extreme caution when using oregano essential oil on or around animals.
2. Only use oils of birch and wintergreen in highly diluted form and sparingly due to the fact they have methyl salicylate a compound similar to Aspirin.
3. Only use therapeutic-grade melaleuca or Tea Tree oil that has been certified to meet the Australian standards. Many cheaper melaleuca oils are not tested for their content of cineole and terpinen and can have a caustic effect on the skin.

How do you determine what essential oil to use on animals?

Rather than assume a certain protocol or suggested oil is good for an animal I always test the essential oil first before using it. I introduce the essential oil to the animal by letting them sniff it

and watch for signs of acceptance as mentioned before. I also use kinesiology with a human surrogate tester for the animal. I also use a dowsing pendulum or one of the many electronic radionic devices for testing oils safe for animals.

What is unique about essential oils from Optimum Choices versus what I can buy in the store?

Optimum Choices only offers therapeutic-grade essential oils. 98% of all essential oils produced are not therapeutic grade. Most of these essential oils are used in the fragrance or perfume industry. They have not undergone the rigorous growing restrictions and passed a gas chromatograph test to insure the purity and chemical content. Because the FDA does not consider essential oils to be of therapeutic value they are regulated by the perfume laws. A majority of the store-bought oils are not therapeutic-grade but will still say “100% pure essential oil” on the label. This does not guarantee that all the oil in the bottle is pure essential oils by volume. What it means is that the bottle contains anywhere from 5–95% pure essential oils and the other 95–5% can be a non-scented carrier oil and they don’t have to specify this on the label. For therapeutic results, always look for the words “therapeutic” or therapeutic-grade” on the label. Of course, the therapeutic-grade essential oils will be more expensive.

So, we can get the essential oils from you. Do you also supply the hydrosols?

Hydrosols are really hard to come by. You see, hydrosols are also used in personal care products like people shampoo and lotions. We have a few bottles of chamomile hydrosol in stock but I can recommend a line of hydrosols for cats from AromaCat.com. They make three hydrosol products specifically for cats called Catnap (calming), Purrfect Ears (waxy ears and ear mites), Meow Ouch (antibacterial and anti-inflammatory as well as calming formula) and Scat! No Fleas Please. For dogs there is Arf-ritis Pain Relief which has rosemary and ginger increase the circulation to the area, while juniper acts as a detoxifier, lavender and birch for calming and to help relieve pain. You can order directly from the supplier at www.AromaCat.com or www.AromaDog.com and tell them Optimum Choices sent you.

Where can my listeners get more information about essential oils?

They can go to our website www.OptimumChoices.com, on the home page click on the [Services](#) button across the top menu bar. Then on the Services page, click the [Aromatherapy](#) button in the left column for a description of aromatherapy.

More detailed information can also be found starting at our home page and clicking the [Products](#) button across the top menu bar. Then on the Products page, click the [Essential Oils](#) button in the left column. Here we have buttons for subsequent web pages on [Science](#), [History](#), [Application](#) and [Animal](#) usage.

Sounds like essential oils are very powerful?

Essential oils are a holistic tool that honors the whole body and can move mental, emotional and even stuck physical energy. It is not a substitute for proper veterinary care.

Yes, I think that is important to let our listeners know you always suggest they take their pet to a vet for proper veterinary diagnosis. But then they can also research holistic alternatives.

You seem to have wealth of pet knowledge. How can we access more of your 57 years of holistic wisdom?

One way is to go to our website, <http://www.OptimumChoices.com> and sign up for our free monthly [e-newsletters](#). We have written articles on such topics as, Is glucosamine the answer for arthritis? Healthy water for you and your pets and Whole Food Nutrition vs. Supplements. All past articles are archived online and one can search for a specific topic. If your listeners will check the box at the bottom of the subscription form, we'll send subscribers a free report entitled **What Pet Food Companies Don't Want You to Know**. This report contains 11-points some of which we covered today.

What other holistic resources do you have that would be of interest my listeners?

We have written a series of Holistic Choices [e-Books](#). Readers can take advantage of the latest holistic research we find and absorb the information in a small chunk rather than a 100+ page book. The first three titles that have been published are:

- *Save Your Dog or Cat*
- *Secrets of Longevity (for people)*
- *How to become a canine massage provider*

Tell me more about what is in your dogs and cats e-Book.

We start off by telling the reader what Nature designed wild dogs and cats to eat. Then we compare all the various food options from dry kibble to raw food to the optimum diet in Nature. We educate the readers on how to find good premium pet food by reading the labels. Next we discuss all the advantages and disadvantages of a raw food diet and how to transition to a raw diet. We also have a section on what human foods are toxic to pets. Many people don't know that grapes, onions and Xylitol, a sweetener, can be toxic.

Sounds like I need to get a copy of your *Save Your Dog or Cat* e-Book. How can I and my listeners get a copy?

Go to our website www.OptimumChoices.com and click on the [Products] button on our home page, then the [Books] button on the subsequent page. As a special offer, I will give your listeners one e-Book of their choice *free* with their first purchase. Just have them say, "**Wendy sent me**" and ask for the *free* e-Book title of their choice with any product purchase.

Come back next month, on June 16, when Russell will discuss— *Is Doggie Massage Just a Spa Thing?* He will discuss how dog massage can benefit your dog and how to find a qualified canine massage provider.

For more information on Optimum Choices and holistic options for your pet, go to Russell's website at www.OptimumChoices.com. You can call toll-free 866-305-2306 or email them at info@OptimumChoices.com.