

Can My Pet Get High from Secondhand Marijuana Smoke?

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Secondhand smoke is part of marijuana – walk into most any concert and you'll find this to be true. The unmistakable smell of pot greets you, its wispy cloud calling you over like a curved finger. This isn't really that big of a deal – it might annoy people who don't like eau de skunk, but it's not likely to get you high. In fact, studies show that people exposed to secondhand smoke can get stoned, but it takes a lot of exposure combined with little ventilation.

Yet, what about pets? One of the reasons people don't get high so easily is their size: the average person in North America weighs 177 pounds. Dogs and cats are much smaller, which allows them to get higher easier. But, is this the case? Does hitting the pipe around Piper leave her purring for pepperoni pizza?

Secondhand Tobacco Smoke and Pets

The effect of secondhand tobacco smoke on people is controversial: some studies link it to health problems (ranging from heart disease to asthma to eye issues), others don't. Still, nonsmokers embrace the no-smoking ban found in restaurants and public places – even if it doesn't cause chronic health issues, it causes acute irritation. And, in all probability, hanging around loads of secondhand smoke (and inhaling the handed down carcinogens) can't be good for you.

It turns out, it's not good for animals, either

According to Pet MD, a 2002 study found that cats exposed to secondhand smoke (or thirdhand – the kind that lingers in couch cushions and curtains), developed malignant lymphoma at a rate of nearly 2.5 times the cats that lived with owners who didn't smoke. For cats who lived more than five years in a smoke-filled environment, the risk of lymphoma was threefold.

This same study also found a correlation between oral cancer in cats and thirdhand smoke, something that may be the result of cats grooming themselves with paws covered in toxins.

Dogs suffer from this type of smoke as well – two studies conducted in the 1990s found that dogs that lived in smoky households had higher rates of cancers in the respiratory tract. Where in the respiratory tract was dictated by the shape of the dog's head – collies with long noses had higher risks of nasal cancer while dogs with shorter noses experienced lung cancer at increased rates.

While there appears to be a link between secondhand tobacco smoke and illness in pets, what about cannabis smoke?

Whether or not cannabis is healthy when overtly smoked isn't known – on one hand, marijuana contains cancer-fighting cannabinoids. On the other, smoking anything introduces chemicals that you don't want. Even smoking a piece of kale probably isn't healthy. That's why many opt to vape – it filters out much of the bad stuff while keeping in much of the good.

Vaping around your pet is safer for them (and for you) than smoking a joint. But what happens if you do the latter? Will your dog laugh at everything you say and engage in introspective thinking: *Why do I turn around three times before laying down?* Or will they just go on with their regularly scheduled programming (i.e., napping and begging for food)?

Secondhand Smoke and Pets

Unless your pet is inside a poorly ventilated room and you're smoking loads and loads of pot, they'll probably remain sober. Yet, that doesn't mean it's good for them – even without a high, animals have sensitive respiratory tracts and smoke can cause irritation that leads to coughing fits and asthma.

However, there are exceptions to the above. When it comes to this issue, size does matter: a ten-pound Maltese will get high much easier than a 90-pound lab. Another factor is how the animal was exposed – sitting in a room with a dog and smoking a bowl is different than blowing that smoke directly into the dog's face. If you do this, concentration and length of exposure come into play –

The longer the animal is exposed and the higher the dose, the more they'll react.

An animal exposed to marijuana reacts in a variety of ways. According to Buzz Feed, they may become lethargic or have problems breathing. They may have low blood pressure or heart palpitations. They may lose their balance and control of their bowels. They may appear calm and relaxed or distressed. Symptoms of discomfort include panting, pacing, and general restlessness.

The good news is it's difficult for animals to die from ingesting weed: they'd have to ingest a ton and smoke isn't a likely route for that. Rather, they'd have to raid your edible collection. Even so, animals that are sick, have underlying health conditions, or are older are more likely to suffer serious or fatal cannabis consequences.

There is a record of two dogs dying from eating cannabis butter, but nothing on smoke exposure. Yet, death isn't the only deterrent – some animals need emergency hospital care and intravenous drugs before they're back to normal. This is traumatizing for them and you.

Medical marijuana specifically geared to help ailing pets is a different story, of course. This is engineered to help ease symptoms without the side effects (or at least with minimal side effects). Exposure to secondhand or thirdhand smoke isn't the same thing as medicinal cannabis.

Smoking around your pet probably won't hurt it as long as you're in a well-ventilated room and not blowing your smoke directing in Rover or Roxy's direction. If you're smoking a lot, or stuff that's very potent, it's always smart to do it away from your furry friends. This eliminates environmental smoke altogether and then you don't have to worry about it. If you do smoke around your pet, be watchful for symptoms and monitor any strange behavior. If your cat is suddenly the life of the party instead of sitting in the windowsill and judging Martha – because, really, why is she wearing that hat? – you might have a problem.