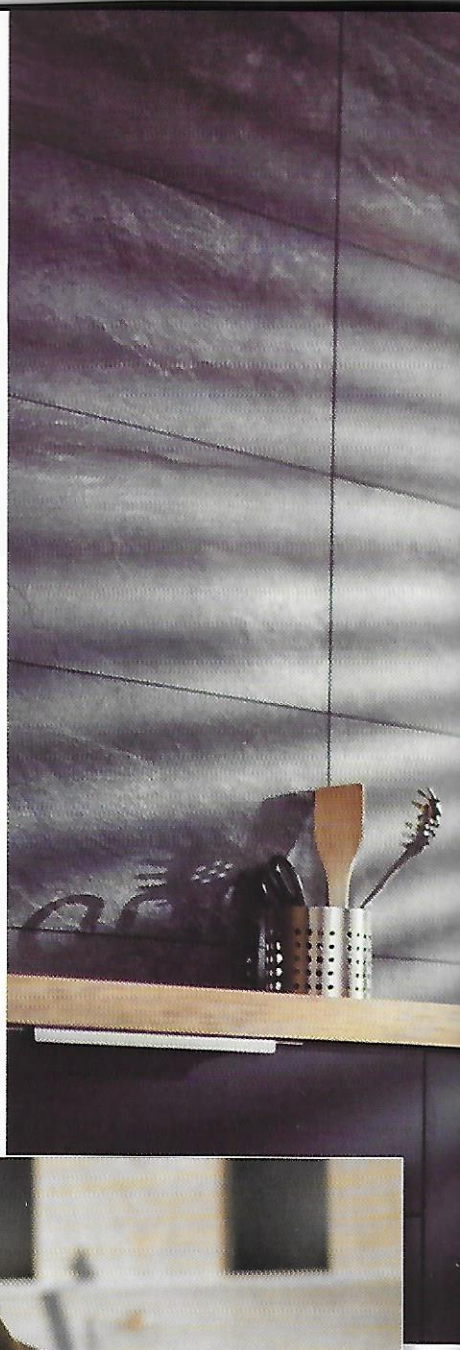
HOME REMEDIES FOR DOGS

Try these easy little helpers found in most kitchen and medicine cabinets. BY AUDREY PAVIA



Dogs sometimes have issues that are safe to try treating at home. Skin and coat problems, vomiting and diarrhea caused by eating the wrong food, environmental allergies, halitosis and anxiety can all be treated first with a home remedy before rushing to the vet. Here are some popular home remedies for dogs.





Skin & coat

A number of home remedies can be helpful when dealing with your dog's skin and coat. Whether it's chapped paws, a dull coat or itchy skin, you may be able to help your dog with products you can find in your kitchen cabinet or buy at your local health food store.

If your dog has a hot spot that is driving him crazy — most likely the result of a flea bite — **baking soda** can help with the itching. Mix warm water with a teaspoon of baking soda to form a paste, and cover the affected area. Your dog may want to lick it off, so putting a medical collar on him for a while can prevent him from removing it.

Another option is a solution of **half vinegar and half water**.

"Keep it in the refrigerator, and spray on hot spots and any smelly areas at least three times a day," says Nancy Scanlan, DVM, executive director of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Foundation in Mt. Shasta, California.

"If a spot is really irritating, so your dog will not leave it alone and keeps licking and biting it, take an **ice cube** and rub it into the spot until the ice is melted," Dr. Scanlan says. "Feel the spot. If it is still hot or rapidly changes from cool to hot, repeat until the spot stays cold to the touch. The anti-itch effect usually lasts for an hour or more."

While humans tend to react to allergens with sneezing and a runny nose, dogs tend to react with itchy skin. If your dog is scratching a lot, he is probably sensitive to something in his environment. A sensitivity to food can also cause this response in dogs. In this case, you should talk to your vet about trying different limited-ingredient dog food diets until you find one that doesn't cause a reaction in your dog, as home remedies aren't effective in treating a food intolerance.



Allergies

If you suspect an environmental allergy like fleas, dust or pollen, try giving your dog a dose of something found in most medicine cabinets: diphenhydramine HCL (also known as **Benadryl**).

"Benadryl is good for problems that mainly cause a big release of histamine, especially for allergies causing sneezing," Dr. Scanlan says. "Allergies involving itchy skin tend to be more complicated than that, but Benadryl can help at least a little. For some dogs it helps a lot. It does not work for food allergies."

Benadryl can be given to your dog two to three times per day. The amount you give will depend on your dog's weight, although before you give it to your dog, contact your veterinarian to make sure it's safe for your particular dog to be treated with this medication.

If your vet gives the OK, start with a 25-milligram pill. Very small dogs who are 4 to 10 pounds can get a quarter of a tablet, while small dogs 10 to 20 pounds can get half a tablet. Medium dogs 20 to 30 pounds can have one tablet. Larger dogs can have one tablet per 25 pounds of body weight. So, a 75-pound dog can have three 25-milligram tablets. Keep in mind that your dog may become sleepy soon after you give him the dose.

Stomach upset

Dogs are notorious for getting upset tummies. The good news is that several home remedies can help.

Pepto-Bismol (generically known as bismuth subsalicylate) can help dogs with both vomiting and diarrhea.

"Pepto-Bismol is a good choice for helping vomiting and diarrhea," Dr. Scanlan says. "If the dog vomits it up immediately and keeps vomiting, you can try it one more time in a half hour. If the dog vomits it up again, stop. You may have to see a veterinarian." Dogs can become dehydrated with vomiting and diarrhea, and need medical attention.

After treating with Pepto-Bismol, your dog's vomiting should decrease or stop within 15 minutes.

"If it decreases but does not stop, you may need to repeat the dose," Dr. Scanlan says. "If the dog vomits up blood, do not give it, and take your dog to the veterinarian."

Pepto-Bismol takes longer to work for diarrhea.

"If your dog has severe diarrhea, where everything is moving through quickly, you will usually see results within one to two hours: stool firming up or going less often," Dr. Scanlan says. "If he just has diarrhea two or three times a day, it can take several hours for results."

Your dog may not have a bowel movement for up to 24 hours after being treated with Pepto-Bismol. If that happens, don't panic.

"He was probably empty because of the diarrhea and so needs some more food to start going again," Dr. Scanlan says.

Dogs can receive 1 teaspoon for every 10 pounds of body weight, and it can be given every six to eight hours. If a few doses don't stop the vomiting or diarrhea, it's time to contact your vet. It's also a good idea to talk to your vet before giving Pepto-Bismol because dogs taking certain medications, like Rimadyl and Dermaxx, should not have it, and it could cause side effects in some dogs. If you live in a multi-pet

When to call the vet



Some issues like vomiting, diarrhea, itching and bad breath can be temporary problems easily fixed with a home remedy — but they can also be signs of a more serious concern.

So how do you know when it's OK to treat your dog at home and when it's time to call the vet? Here are some guidelines:

▶ **No appetite.** If your normally hungry chow-hound has skipped one or two meals, it's time to call the vet. Loss of appetite can indicate a potentially serious illness, and time may be of the essence.

▶ **Lethargy.** If your dog is acting tired and depressed, something may be seriously wrong. He might be in pain, have a fever or be suffering from something only a vet can diagnose and cure.

▶ **No response to home remedies.** "Stop home remedies if your dog gets worse in the next 24 hours," says Nancy Scanlan, DVM, executive director of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Foundation. "If he vomits blood or has bloody diarrhea, take him to the vet immediately."

Shawn Messonnier, DVM, agrees, adding that a sick dog should see a veterinarian right away, rather than being treated with home remedies.

"Anytime the pet is not better within 24 hours, or if the pet is uncomfortable, see the vet first," he says.

household, note that Pepto-Bismol is toxic to cats.

Another over-the-counter remedy for an upset stomach that includes vomiting is **Pepcid,** also known generically as famotidine. You can give your dog a quarter of a 10-milligram tablet of famotidine for every 10 pounds of his weight. So, if he weighs 10 pounds, he would get a quarter of a tablet. At 20 pounds, he'd get half a tablet. At 30 pounds, he'd get three-quarters of a tablet, and at 40 pounds, he'd get one tablet. This medication can be given every 12 to 24 hours as needed. Because there are a variety of formulas, ask your vet which one is safe for your dog.

Bad breath

Any number of medical issues can cause your dog to have bad breath. Dental disease and internal infection are just two. If your vet has already given your dog a clean bill of health but you still want his breath to be sweeter, try offering him a sprig of parsley every day.

According to Shawn Messonnier, DVM, author of *Natural Health Bible for Dogs & Cats*, chewing **fresh parsley** seems to provide a dog's mouth with a cleansing action. While not all dogs will eat parsley, the ones who do have nicer breath after a good chew on this healthy herb.

Anxiety

You'll find a number of natural remedies for anxiety in dogs at your local pet supply store or online, but one that can help both you and your dog at the same time is **lavender** or **calendula essential oil**, according to Dr. Messonnier. Using a diffuser you plug into an electrical outlet in a room where both you and your dog spend time, place several drops of lavender or calendula essential oil in the diffuser.

If you notice your dog seems calmer and quieter after spending some time in the room with the lavender oil scent, turn the diffuser on during thunderstorms, on the Fourth of July or anytime your dog seems under stress. 🐾



An award-winning writer and editor, Audrey Pavia is a former managing editor at Dog Fancy *magazine and former senior editor of* The AKC Gazette. *She is the author of* The Labrador Retriever Handbook *(Barrons) and has written extensively on horses, as well as other pets. She shares her home in Norco, California, with two rescue dogs, Candy and Mookie.*

