

Audio Summaries: Louise Buckley - Does Pet Remedy reduce stress in dogs?

Louise Buckley

Hello, I'm Louise Buckley. I'm a veterinary nurse and this Knowledge Summary examines the evidence for the use of Pet Remedy in stressed dogs.

The title of my PICO is: in stress dogs does using a pet remedy diffuser compared to not using one result in lower stress levels. I was keen to investigate this product because I have seen it promoted more and more widely in veterinary practices, on Facebook forums, in pet shops and so on, with mixed anecdotal reports from both veterinary professionals and pet owner users.

So I reviewed three databases for peer reviewed scientific studies, but I also contacted the manufacturer of Pet Remedy to ask for their grey literature. This is because I was aware that they were supplying the results of their own sponsored scientific studies to any veterinary professional that asked for the evidence base. So I wanted to ensure that I was being fair to them in terms of them having the opportunity to provide the evidence for that product.

So from my literature search, three studies were identified as suitable for inclusion, and these were reviewed. Two of these investigated Pet Remedy and one investigated Valerian, which is an active ingredient in Pet Remedy on aspects of canine behaviour associated with stress.

The highest quality study was a randomized control trial that found that Pet Remedy had no significant effect on particularly stress susceptible dogs exposed to an acute stressor. The weakest quality study was a randomized controlled trial that found a significant positive effect, but had high levels of industry involvement, weak and incomplete scientific reporting, weak and incomplete methodology and was not peer reviewed prior to publication. Plus, I felt that the findings were unreliable.

The final study was a quasi experimental fixed treatment order control trial, and that found a positive effect of environmentally applied Valerian on its own on the behaviour of shelter dogs. However, experimental design in this study, limited interpretation of the findings in relation to canine stress reduction and external validity in relation to applicability to Pet Remedy use is weak.

It's important to note that none of the studies found that the use of Pet Remedy or Valerian increased stress levels in dogs, therefore in conclusion, where used as an adjunct Pet Remedy is unlikely to do any direct animal welfare harm and may have a positive effect based on the studies that have unreliable findings and/ or low external validity. However, unless further high-quality research demonstrates a positive, Effective Pet remedy veterinary professionals should be cautious about recommending it as an alternative to options with a stronger evidentiary basis, or a delay to seeking more extensive professional support where needed.

There is a need for further research to examine the efficacy of Pet Remedy on behavioural and physiological indices of canine stress reduction across the range of common, stressful scenarios to further support veterinary professional decision-making.

Thank you for listening.

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