

## Behavior Supplements in Dogs and Cats

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Many colleagues and pet owners ask about the use of supplements in the treatment of behavioral issues. There is limited documented evidence on the use of these supplements, but to address this demand for information, here is what we know is being used and impressions from what experience and data are available.

There are many different products available if your pet shows unwanted behaviors such as anxiety, fear of strangers, aggression, or stress-related conditions. Always check with your veterinarian prior to giving your pet any supplement, even if it is available without a prescription.

### Behavioral Supplements

Behavioral supplements are a combination of dietary supplements such as vitamins, minerals or herbal supplements, and diet. There are many common supplements available. The common ingredients of many of these supplements are listed below.

### Reducing Fear and Anxiety

- **L-Theanine:** This plant based amino acid is thought to help regulate behavior and mood by affecting the central nervous system. Studies have shown decreased anxiety in cats, decreased fear of strangers in dogs, and decreased noise related anxiety during thunderstorms.
- ***Magnolia officinalis*:** This has been shown to have an anti-anxiety affect when studied in mice. Humans have also reported improved mood while taking this supplement.
- ***Phellodendron amurense*:** This has been shown to have neuroprotective abilities, meaning it may help protect the brain from the effects of stress and prevent mood disorders.
- **Alpha-lactalbumin:** This cow milk derivative contains high concentrations of amino acids, including tryptophan. It is believed that chronic anxiety depletes tryptophan in the brain.
- **Melatonin:** This hormone is secreted during the evening and is known to facilitate sleep. Melatonin has been used for a variety of fear and anxiety-based behaviors, however scientific evidence indicating its effectiveness is lacking.
- **Tryptophan:** Studies show that there may be a link between the metabolism of tryptophan and fear in dogs and cats. There is not a veterinary supplement that

contains tryptophan alone, but this ingredient is found in some therapeutic diets.

- Alpha-casozepine: This cow milk derivative has been shown to reduce anxiety without causing sedation or sleepiness. This supplement has also been shown to reduce fear of strangers and sensitivity to nail trims in dogs. Cats were also shown to have a reduction of feline lower urinary tract disease, which may be caused by stress.
- *Souroubea spp.* containing betulinic acid and *Platanus spp.*: Extracts of flowering plants combined and formulated for use in dogs only have been used for stress-related behaviors caused by noise phobias.

### Supporting Cognitive Functions

- S-Adenosylmethionine (SAME): This supplement plays a critical role in creating feel-good neurotransmitters and is sometimes used to treat fears and anxieties. Dogs and cats with cognitive decline given SAME showed improved cognitive abilities and increased activity in senior dogs.
- Phosphatidylserine, Pyridoxine, Vitamin E, Ginkgo biloba extract, and Resveratrol: These antioxidants are used to decrease the clinical signs of brain aging.
- Omega 3 Fatty Acids
  - DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) is beneficial for the development of nervous and retinal tissue in puppies. It is thought to be essential for cognitive learning, memory, and trainability in puppies.
  - EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) is an anti-inflammatory thought to reduce the signs of aging associated with cognitive decline, while improving learning.
- Apoeaquorin: Obtained from jellyfish, it is believed to have a direct benefit on learning and attention in dogs with cognitive decline.

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