

Is that grooming product as "natural" as you think?

Written by Kasie Maxwell, 2002

We are proud of our ingredients and fully disclose what goes into every bottle. We use grapefruit seed extract, essential oils and vodka as natural preservatives. Only the highest quality herbs are incorporated into every product we make. We have searched the world of suppliers to find the highest quality, freshest, certified organic or wild-crafted herbs we could find. Essential oils and/or genuine hydrosols are added for their powerful therapeutic qualities, and we seek out only the finest, pharmaceutical grade pure, certified organic (whenever possible) suppliers of these special and powerful substances.

Our shampoo is simply one of the purist conditioning cleaners you will find.

Rara Avis uses our own home-made organic herbal infusion as a base. A dilute amount of Dr. Bronner's organic liquid unscented castile soap is blended with our own herbal infusion base and soapwort herb to act as natural, balanced and gentle sudsing agents/cleansers. Natural clays and saponified oils of coconut and olive boost the cleansing power of the shampoo without the use of harsh chemicals. Rich, natural conditioners such as organic aloe vera juice, organic oatmeal, organic jojoba oil, organic kukui nut oil and organic shea butter are included for naturally clean, balanced skin and coat.

Check the labels of most other "natural" beauty products, and you will notice that they hide harsh chemical ingredients by using vague statements in their ingredient listings like "natural coconut based cleansers". There are [no FDA rules that require companies to disclose what's really in that bottle](#) and that "natural coconut based cleanser" generally contains ingredients you might not want to use on your pet - especially if your pet has sensitive skin or is not in perfect health.

The use of terms such as "mild coconut based cleanser", "herbal conditioning base", "coconut cleaner base" is not adequate disclosure as to what the product actually contains. Unfortunately, with vague descriptions like these, one can never know the actual ingredients used in the product.

The term "coconut oil derived cleanser base" can include:

- Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES)
- Ammonium Lauryl Sulfate (ALS)
- Cetearyl alcohol
- Cocamidopropyl Betaine
- Cocamide MEA
- Cocamide DEA
- Lauramide DEA

If you want to be sure you are using only mild, natural ingredients on your animal companion, request a list of the product's INCI (International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients) ingredient names from the manufacturer - or ask for more clarification on what they use to make the product.

Sodium lauryl sulfate is a high volume synthetic chemical used in consumer products and is also regulated as a pesticide. A suspected gastrointestinal or liver toxicant, sodium lauryl sulfate can be drying and harsh for the hair and cause eye irritation, allergic reactions, and hair loss. According to the National Toxicology Program, it has shown moderate reproductive effects in experiments. It has not been tested for neurotoxicity.

Sodium lauryl sulfate is not a recognized carcinogen. However, the chemical is frequently combined with TEA (triethanolamine), DEA (diethanolamine), or MEA (monoethanolamine), which can cause the formation of the carcinogenic substances nitrosamines.

Unlike most other "natural" grooming product companies, Rara Avis never uses:

- chemical preservatives (methyl-, ethyl-, propyl- and butylparabens and/or methylisothiazolinone and methylchloroisothiazolinone) - [which recent reports suggest are unsafe](#)
- harsh cleansing agents like SLS or SLES: sodium laurel sulphate, sodium laureth sulphate - [which have been associated with some serious health concerns](#), but have not yet been proven to [cause cancer](#) when tested alone
- TEA-lauryl sulfate, TEA (triethanolamine), MEA (monnoethanolamine), lauramide DEA (diethanolamine) or cocamide DEA (diethanolamine) - [which have been linked to cancer](#).
- "natural" petroleum or coconut-derived surfactants - which almost always contain SLS, DEA and other harsh or dangerous chemicals
- propylene glycol (commonly found in anti-freeze)
- mineral oil
- talc

Rara Avis proudly purchases all of our herbs from Mountain Rose Herbs and our essential oils and hydrosols from Bassett Aromatherapy. We highly recommend these companies for their ethics, integrity and outstanding high quality and are proud to feature their raw materials in our exceptional products.

Post-Script - about Rara Avis: Rara Avis was the original herbal remedy and natural supplement company started by Kasie Maxwell which included SFRAW as the food buyer's club associated with Rara Avis. Rara Avis featured a line of 14 different herbal supplements, natural remedies, grooming and first aid products all developed and crafted by Kasie. Over time SFRAW grew from being a little side-project and became an independent business entity, while Rara Avis was eventually dissolved; the product line becoming a part of the SFRAW Apothecary line (Seasonal Herbs, Starter's Detox Herbs & Healthy Powder). Plans to update & re-launch the original Grooming and First Aid products developed by Kasie is in the works, but on hold for now. Stay tuned...