

VETERINARY ACUPUNCTURE IN PETS

BY ROSE DILIVA

Acupuncture is a Chinese medical treatment that has been used in human medicine for over 3,000 years to relieve muscle spasms, increase blood circulation, improve tissue blood flow, improve oxygenation, stimulate nerves, release certain hormones and neurotransmitters, as well as, removal of toxic waste and toxins. There is evidence of acupuncture being utilized in India 5,000 years ago. It was the Chinese, however, who academically systemized the practice of acupuncture and the philosophical construct of Traditional Chinese Medicine Theory.

Veterinary Acupuncture, treating animals with acupuncture, began in 1975 with the formation of The International Veterinary Acupuncture Society. Presently, the American Veterinary Medical Association considers veterinary acupuncture a valid modality, and the procedures utilized as surgical and/or medical in nature. My studies in veterinary acupuncture began in 1998 and resulted in my certification as a Veterinary



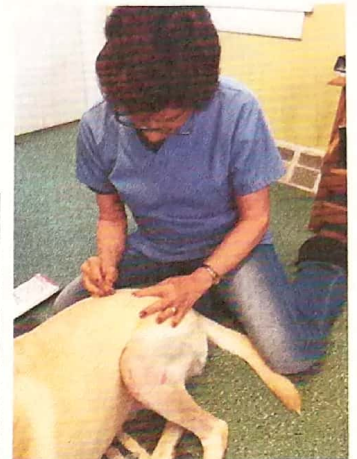
12 1/2 year old Rosie is receiving treatment for her head tilt.

Acupuncturist from the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society in 1999. It has been a focus of my holistic practice and has helped thousands of dogs and cats with multiple problems over the years.

Acupuncture is the placement of tiny needles into specific locations on the body (typically where nerve bundles and blood vessels come together), for the purposes of healing. These specific locations are called acupuncture points. Acupuncture points are very specific anatomical locations on the body. The energy channels on which the acupuncture points exist are termed meridians. One's "Qi" or energy flows along various pathways/meridians during the course of a 24-hour cycle. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine Theory, when Qi is not flowing smoothly through a meridian, an obstruction occurs leading to disease. The placement of the acupuncture needles will remove this obstruction, allow free flow of Qi and encourage the body to heal itself.

Acupuncture can be useful for pets suffering from a number of different medical conditions. Musculoskeletal problems such as arthritis, intervertebral disc disease, degenerative joint disease, hip dysplasia, spondylosis, sprains, strains, and acute trauma can all respond positively to acupuncture. Urinary system problems such as cystitis (urinary tract infection), feline urologic syndrome and urinary incontinence respond well to acupuncture. Gastrointestinal issues such as vomiting, diarrhea, colitis, fecal incontinence and inflammatory bowel disease are commonly treated with acupuncture in my office. Metabolic problems such as hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, Cushing's disease, and diabetes, benefit from acupuncture as well. Additional conditions that respond positively from acupuncture include seizures of unknown origin, epilepsy, asthma, kidney disease, liver disease, dermatitis, hot spots, lick granulomas, behavior problems and pain management.

Veterinary acupuncture is beneficial because it lacks potential side effects that come along with many prescription or over-the-counter drugs. Additionally, acupuncture will not interfere with whatever medications or supplements your pet may be taking. It can be used safely to treat a variety of conditions. In my office, the pet is given a comprehensive eastern and western physical examination first. If it is determined that acupuncture can be of benefit, then the dry needles are inserted into



Bella is 6 1/2 and is receiving treatment after her surgery for cranial cruciate rupture.

the appropriate locations on the body. The needles are very small with even smaller diameters and are sterile when placed on the body. Cats and small dogs are treated on the examination table, larger dogs are often treated on the floor on a blanket, where they relax and enjoy some treats with their person next to them. Treatments last approximately 15-20 minutes. Many of the dogs and cats will yawn during their treatment as acupuncture releases endorphins, one of the body's natural relaxing chemicals. In most chronic disease conditions, I like the dog or cat to be seen weekly for at least 3-4 treatments. After that, it is determined what is the best maintenance schedule for that patient. For example, a dog with degenerative arthritis may need to be seen once a month or once every other month. In the cold winter, however, they may be more stiff and painful from their arthritis. In these cases, I would see them more frequently during the cold months of the year. Most patients enjoy their treatments and wag their tails coming into the office! I truly believe that they associate coming in for their acupuncture treatment with feeling better and less achy. Clients often comment that they are "acting like a puppy again".

Dr. Rose DiLeva is an integrative/holistic veterinarian. She is a certified veterinary acupuncturist and a certified veterinary chiropractor. She is the owner of Animal Wellness Center in Chadds Ford, Pa. Dr. DiLeva has been the focus of many articles and news pieces, including 6ABC and KYW news channels. Check out her website at www.altpetdoc.com. Office appointments and telephone consultations can be arranged by calling 610-558-1616.



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