

Veterinary Acupuncture

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Acupuncture was developed by the ancient Chinese over 3,000 years ago. In the simplest of terms, acupuncture consists of stimulating designated and precise points on the surface of the body by the insertion of fine solid needles. Other methods of acupuncture include acupressure, moxibustion (use of heat), electroacupuncture (use of electrical stimulation), aquapuncture (use of fluid), and low power laser acupuncture.

Acupuncture is one of the main branches of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). In TCM, there is understood to be a universal energy called Qi present in every living creature. This energy circulates throughout the body, 24 hours a day. Two primary opposing forms of Qi, Yin and Yang, are present, maintaining balance in the body. Qi flows along specific pathways in the body called meridians. As long as this energy flows freely throughout the meridians and their associated organs, health is maintained. However, if the flow of energy is disturbed, the balance of Yin and Yang will be lost, causing pain and disease to occur. Pain is interpreted as blockage of Qi; disease is due to imbalances of Qi. By stimulating certain points on the meridians, acupuncture normalizes the flow of Qi, thereby resolving any blockage, deficiency, or excess. This then restores balance and normal functions of the body.

As a holistic form of veterinary medicine, acupuncture—and TCM in general-- therefore allows the body to participate in its own healing process, without the use of artificial substances. TCM is a healing science which deals with the whole animal as a living being, rather than simply as a collection of signs and symptoms. The animal's body, mind, spirit, and environment must be assessed together to obtain a diagnosis and treatment plan. Thus, effective veterinary acupuncture practice is based upon both the natural and scientific aspects of healing.

The training of a veterinary acupuncturist includes both Eastern and Western medical methods, and most veterinarians integrate TCM into their traditional medical practice. In Texas, only licensed veterinarians may perform acupuncture for the care and medical treatment of animals. To properly practice veterinary acupuncture, a veterinarian must have undergone rigorous, extensive training to become a Certified Veterinary Acupuncturist (CVA). This certification is typically obtained from a respected veterinary acupuncture Institute or University. To earn the title of CVA, a veterinarian must accomplish the following: study over 160 hours in an approved acupuncture course (this typically requires a time commitment of a year or more); have professional case report(s) accepted demonstrating their competence and knowledge of TCM; pass final written and practical acupuncture and TCM examinations; and obtain hands-on experience (or "internship") with one or more Certified Veterinary Acupuncturists for a prescribed number of hours.

Acupuncture is a useful and important therapy for a wide variety of veterinary medical disorders. Treatment is tailored to each individual pet's needs and imbalances. Veterinary conditions for which acupuncture treatment is effectively utilized include the following:

- Pain (back, neck, joint, or soft tissue; post-operative pain management)
- Musculoskeletal problems (arthritis, spondylosis, muscle/ tendon/ligamentous injuries)
- Neurologic disorders (seizures, peripheral neuropathies, intervertebral disc disease)
- Gastrointestinal problems (diarrhea, vomiting, constipation, anorexia, IBD)
- Other chronic diseases (asthma, bronchitis, uveitis, endocrine disorders, infertility, skin disorders, renal disease, vestibular disease, neoplasia)
- Performance enhancement (agility, hunting, etc)

In addition, many clients choose acupuncture for their pets for chronic debilitating pain, chronic internal medical disorders, disease that is non-responsive to traditional therapy, neoplasia (cancer), cognitive disorders and dementia, and for improved quality of life for terminal conditions. For most conditions, herbal therapy augments the response to acupuncture. Acupuncture is usually utilized with other Western therapies and other to achieve the optimum result. While every animal reacts differently, approximately 90% of animals will have a good to excellent response to acupuncture therapy.