

## Information for You About Veterinary Acupuncture

Acupuncture is one of the varieties of therapies that we use at our hospital. Most simply stated, acupuncture is the stimulation of specific points on the body, commonly by means of a very thin, flexible needle. Stimulation of acupuncture points causes a complex cascade of body responses and the release of the body's natural pain relievers. Acupuncture can enhance wound healing or repair of a fracture, can relieve muscle spasms, can stimulate the immune system or the birthing process, can enhance the blood supply to a degenerating point, and can dilate the respiratory passages to bring relief to an asthmatic patient.

Acupuncture point locations have been carefully mapped out in humans and in most domestic animals. These point locations are not new information, in some cases, they have been used in treatments for thousands of years. In fact, acupuncture is still the treatment of choice for nearly one quarter of the world's population! Descriptions of acupuncture treatments in animals date back nearly 4,500 years.

Veterinarians receive training through the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (IVAS). Certification in veterinary acupuncture requires hundreds of hours of coursework, completion of scientific papers for publication, and competence in written and practical examinations. There are 1000 veterinarians certified by IVAS in this country.

### Commonly Asked Questions About Acupuncture

#### **Q: What conditions respond to acupuncture?**

We often use acupuncture to bridge the gap between medicine and surgery. It is often our therapy of choice when medication is not working or when it is contraindicated because of serious side effects. We also often use acupuncture when surgery is not feasible, either because of anesthetic risk or the owner's desire to avoid a surgical procedure. Some common examples of use include:

- Musculoskeletal problems: hip or elbow dysplasia, arthritis, degenerative joint disease, chronic pain syndromes, and neck or back injuries. Acupuncture is often used in conjunction with chiropractic care for these problems.
  - Skin problems: frequent skin infections, ear infections, excessive hair chewing, flea bite allergies, lick granulomas, and chronic mange infestations. Herbal treatment may be appropriate as well.
  - Nerve disorders: traumatic nerve injury or paralysis, certain types of muscle weakness or paralysis resulting from back or neck injuries, degenerative nerve conditions such as German Shepherd Myelopathy.
  - Respiratory problems: asthma, chronic lung disease, respiratory changes associated with heart failure.
  - Urogenital problems: Frequent bladder or prostate problems. Herbal treatment may be added.
- Reproductive problems: Failure to cycle, uterine infections, as an alternative to Cesarean sections.

#### **Q: How does acupuncture work?**

According to Chinese philosophy, disease is an imbalance of energy in the body. Acupuncture therapy is based upon balancing the body's energy by regulating the flow of energy and thereby permitting the body to heal itself.

We know that acupuncture affects all major body systems. It works primarily through the central nervous system. Over 100 different neurotransmitters and neurohormones can be released as a result of acupuncture treatment. As these factors are released, they enter the circulatory system and can exert their effects in areas very distant from the actual acupuncture point treated. Acupuncture also increases blood flow, pain relief, and immune response in the area treated, thus exerting a local effect as well.

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