

Veterinary Acupuncture has been practiced in China for at least 2000 years with great success. It is considered mainstream in Asian countries, and it is becoming increasingly popular here in the United States as well. Acupuncture has been used to treat diseases in a variety of animals including dogs, cats, horses, cattle, and birds. Scientific studies have documented the benefits provided by this type of treatment.



Acupuncture can be defined as the stimulation of a specific point using a specific method to achieve a desired physiological response. These points are called “acupoints,” and they are located over various nerve endings, lymphatic channels, and blood vessels. Each acupoint has a name and is located on an energetic channel called a meridian. There are 12 major meridians that course

over the body and each is associated with an organ. These meridians may have anywhere from nine to sixty-seven points. For example, the bladder meridian starts at the head with BL-1 and ends at the hind foot with BL-67.

Acupoints may be stimulated in a variety of ways. These techniques include dry needle, moxibustion, aqua-acupuncture, electro-stimulation, and hemo-acupuncture. Dry needle technique involves stimulation of a point with a thin gauge sterile acupuncture needle. “Moxa” is the technique used to heat or warm an acupoint. Aqua-acupuncture involves the use of hypodermic needles and B-12 vitamin injections. Electro-acupuncture utilizes two separate points on 1 lead connected to an electrical source. This method stimulates a targeted area or a portion of a specific meridian. Hemo-acupuncture is the method used to draw blood out of a specific point. All of these methods are used together with a common goal of restoring physiological balance and health in the animal.

Acupuncture is an extremely safe and reliable medical procedure when performed by a qualified veterinary practitioner. There are very few side effects reported, and most patients are comfortable with the therapy. Some animals will even fall asleep during the procedure. Each treatment may last from twenty minutes to an hour. Some animals may respond to one treatment, where as others may need weekly to monthly treatments for more chronic, degenerative conditions.

There are a variety of medical conditions where acupuncture may prove to be effective. Clinical trials have indicated that acupuncture can help relieve musculoskeletal problems such as back pain, muscle soreness, and arthritis. Neurological conditions such as laryngeal hemiplegia, wobblers syndrome, and nerve paralysis have also successfully been treated with acupuncture. Other chronic conditions include but are not limited to anhidrosis, heaves, uveitis, infertility, geriatric weakness, skin conditions, and behavioral issues.

As one can see, acupuncture has proven to be a successful, noninvasive procedure that is used to treat many different problems. As more clinical studies and research projects are performed, a better understanding of this type of therapy will be gained, and therefore the animals will greatly benefit. Contact your local veterinarian for any questions regarding acupuncture in your animal.

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