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Veterinary Acupuncture

Acupuncture is one of a variety of treatment options used at Greenhaven Animal Clinic. Most simply stated, acupuncture is the stimulation of specific points on the body, commonly by means of a very thin, flexible needle. Stimulation of an acupuncture point causes a complex cascade of body responses and the release of various neurochemicals and hormones into the bloodstream. Depending on the point stimulated, acupuncture can result in the release of the body's natural pain relievers; can enhance wound healing, can relieve muscle spasms; can stimulate the immune system; can enhance the blood supply to a degenerating joint; and can dilate the respiratory passages to bring relief to an asthmatic patient.

Acupuncture point locations have been carefully mapped out in humans and horses over thousands of years. Over the last 75 years these points have been located and used in our small animal friends. In fact, acupuncture is used as a mainstay of medical treatment in many eastern countries.

Acupuncture points may be easily located on most pets by a trained individual. Dr. Karren received her training in acupuncture through The Chi Institute of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine. Certification in veterinary acupuncture through The Chi Institute requires hundreds of hours of coursework, completion of case studies, and competence in written and practical examinations.

1. What can acupuncture be used for?

Acupuncture is often used in conjunction with other treatment options, including surgical intervention. It is also a good treatment 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: hips or elbow dysplasia, arthritis, degenerative joint disease, chronic pain syndromes, and neck or back injuries.
- 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.

- Behavior problems: Inappropriate urination, some cause of aggression, anxiety

2. How does acupuncture work and is it safe for my pet?

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, disease is an imbalance in the body. Acupuncture therapy helps to restore balance by regulating the flow of energy, allowing the body to play a larger role in healing itself.

Acupuncture works primarily through the central nervous system, but has an effect on all major body systems. A cascade of different neurotransmitters and neurohormones are released as a result of acupuncture treatment. These factors can help with pain, inflammation, infection, and blood flow. Their effects can be beneficial in areas very distant from the actual acupuncture point treated.

Acupuncture has been shown to be one of the safest treatment options we have available for our patients. All needles used are sterile and disposable. Acupuncture is a gentle treatment to help restore balance and typically causes no side effects. Some animals will feel a brief moment of discomfort at the insertion of a needle, but most animals relax and enjoy treatment while the needles are in place. Many of our patients will even sleep during treatment!

3. What can I expect when my pet is treated with acupuncture?

Treatments may last from 5 to 30 minutes, depending on the condition treated and the method. Patients are often treated 1-2 times a week for 4-8 weeks. A positive response is usually noted during the first 3-5 treatments, sometimes earlier, depending on the condition treated. Once a positive response to treatment is seen, we reduce the treatments to the minimum that will maintain the patient.

We often use other methods besides basic dry needles to provide the best therapy for our patients. This includes electroacupuncture, the use of a mild electric current, and aqua acupuncture, using vitamin B12 to stimulate acupoints. Many patients may also benefit from herbal therapy and diet therapy depending on their condition.

For more information about this excellent treatment modality, contact Greenhaven Animal Clinic at 309/247-3231.