



Acupuncture

Acupuncture may be defined as a stimulation of specific points on the body to produce a healing response. Each acupuncture point has specific actions when stimulated. This technique has been used in veterinary practice in China for thousands of years to treat many animal conditions. It can also be used as preventative medicine. Acupuncture is used all around the world, either alone or in conjunction with Western medicine, to treat a wide variety of conditions in every species of animal. It can work very well when it is indicated, however it will not cure every condition.

For Which Conditions is Acupuncture Indicated?

Although most of animal health ailments treated with acupuncture is musculoskeletal conditions, its efficacy reaches beyond that, treating infectious, non-infectious, and behavioural diseases. The following are some general conditions which may be treated with acupuncture:
Musculoskeletal problems, such as arthritis, intervertebral disk disease, or traumatic nerve injury; Respiratory problems, such as feline asthma; Skin problems such as lick granulomas and allergic dermatitis; Gastrointestinal problems such as diarrhoea; Selected reproductive problems; Neurological problems such as facial paralysis. Regular

acupuncture can also help animals who are involved in any athletic endeavour by keeping their muscles, tendons and ligaments more resistant to injuries.

How Does Acupuncture Work? Stimulating acupuncture points can assist the body to heal itself by affecting certain physiological changes. For example, acupuncture can stimulate nerves, increase blood circulation, relieve muscle spasm, and cause the release of hormones, such as endorphins (one of the body's pain control chemicals) and cortisol (a natural steroid). These points can be stimulated by many methods such as needling (the most used form), acupressure, moxibustion, electro stimulation, gold beads, aquapuncture and laser.

Is Acupuncture Painful? For small animals, the insertion of acupuncture needles is virtually painless. In all animals, once the needles are in place, there should be no pain. The needles used for acupuncture have a rounded point that separates the skin and muscle fibres, this is less painful than the cutting action of a hypodermic needle (e.g. injection needles). The skin is the most sensitive part and once through the skin, there is no pain in putting the needle deeper into the muscle. Most animals become very

relaxed and may even become sleepy. Nevertheless, acupuncture treatment may cause some sensation, presumed to be those such as tingles, cramps, or numbness which can occur in humans and which may be uncomfortable to some animals.

Is Acupuncture Safe for Animals?

Acupuncture is one of the safest forms of medical treatment for animals when it is administered by a properly trained veterinarian. Side effects are very rare. The outcomes expected after your pet's acupuncture treatment can be: No obvious change in the symptoms, but he/she may be "brighter"; Symptoms improve for 24- 48 hours, then slowly worsen; Symptoms get worse for 12 - 24 hours, then improve rapidly; Some animals become lethargic or sleepy for 24 hours. These effects are an indication that some physiological changes are developing, and they are most often followed by an improvement in the animal's condition. Animals which have a chronic condition will be more likely to need a longer treatment in comparison to one with an acute (sudden onset) illness. Acute conditions may be resolved with 1-3 treatments used daily. Chronic conditions may require several treatments at weekly intervals. The number and frequency of treatment is adjusted according to your pet's needs. In general, acupuncture can be effectively combined with most conventional and alternative therapies. Certified acupuncturist veterinarians have the comprehensive training, knowledge and skill to understand the interactions between different forms of treatment and to interpret the patient's response to therapy.