

Information for you about Veterinary Acupuncture

Acupuncture is one of the variety 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 an acupuncture point causes a complex cascade of body responses and the release of the body's natural pain relievers; 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 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 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 in acupuncture 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 about 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 now 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.

Q: Is acupuncture painful?

Acupuncture is performed with thin, flexible needles many times smaller than the ones used to give your pet a vaccination. We only use disposable needles. Sometimes a pet will experience a brief moment of sensitivity as the needle passed through the skin. Once the needles are in place, most animals relax, sometimes even falling asleep during the treatment!

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Q: Is acupuncture treatment safe?

Acupuncture is one of the safest therapies available, if performed by a competent acupuncturist. Because acupuncture balances the body's own system of healing and no chemicals are administered, it is rare for complications or side effects to develop.

Q: How often and for how long is a pet treated?

Treatments may last from 30 seconds to 30 minutes, depending on the condition treated and the method employed. Patients are often treated 1-2 times a week for 6-8 weeks. A positive response is usually noted during the first 4-6 treatments, sometimes earlier, depending on the condition treated. Once a response to treatment is seen, we reduce the treatments to the minimum that will maintain the patient.

There are many methods of stimulating acupuncture points. Besides the common use of needles in treatment, we may use other techniques, such as:

- Electroacupuncture: use of a mild electric current with or without needles.
- Acupressure: application of pressure over an acupuncture point.
- Moxibustion: application of heat, by burning herbs, over an acupuncture point.
- Laser acupuncture: application of laser light to an acupuncture point.

Q: Which of the Doctors at County Animal Clinic perform veterinary acupuncture?

Dr. Anders is a skilled and experienced veterinary acupuncturist, certified in veterinary acupuncture through the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (I.V.A.S.). He has been involved in many advanced courses in veterinary acupuncture. He is one of less than 20 Veterinarians in the country that also does acupuncture in food animals, equine, exotics and small animals.

Q: How do I know that your hospital is the right place for me and my pet?

County Animal Clinic is a mixed animal practice dealing with traditional and integrative medicine. This means that we adhere to the highest standards of patient care, client education, and training for our Doctors and staff. We bring you the best of advanced knowledge about both western medicine and other systems of medical care, such as acupuncture, chiropractic, herbal medicine and other healing modalities. Most importantly, we treat your pet with the same care and compassion that we would give to one of our own pets.

Q: How do I schedule my pet for acupuncture care?

To schedule an in-office consultation or for information about acupuncture consultations and treatment, phone County Animal Clinic at: 419-678-3610 or 800-868-VETS (8387). Because we are committed to excellence in holistic and traditional treatment, we examine each patient thoroughly and we do not provide telephone consultations. Veterinary medical ethics stipulates that we cannot offer medical advice or dispense holistic or traditional medicines for pets we have not examined.