Acupuncture and Pets, What You Need to Know

In addition to conventional veterinary medicine, acupuncture is utilized by some licensed veterinarians. According to Dr. Pedro Rivera at the Healing Oasis Wellness Center in Sturtevant, Wis., acupuncture can help improve discomfort caused by degenerative joint disease and chronic pain related to other medical conditions.

The frequency of acupuncture treatment depends specifically on the condition and severity of the pain. A complete physical examination must first be completed by the pet's veterinarian to ensure that the pet is able to undergo the medical procedure.

A common misconception regarding acupuncture is that it is painful to pets. Dr. Rivera admits some patients may flinch slightly, but for the most part, the procedure is not painful and most of the patients become very relaxed and some even fall asleep!

There are many benefits associated with acupuncture in pets, but as with almost every procedure, there are a few risks as well. Mainly, benefits include reducing pain and improving the quality of life for pets suffering with chronic pain and discomfort, helping wounds heal and assisting with some neurological conditions. A main risk of acupuncture is that if the veterinarian is not assessing for trans-neural degeneration (a process in which the brain and nervous system decreases in functionality) the patient can be weakened indirectly and unintentionally.

Acupuncture works very well, side by side, with conventional medicine. Dr. Rivera states that acupuncture should be used very cautiously if a pet suffers from seizures, epilepsy, hyperesthesia, cancer and any other condition that might be affected if the absorption of a medication is influenced.

In order to become licensed to perform acupuncture on pets, Dr. Rivera obtained a degree in veterinary medicine and also completed extensive post-graduate training in his field. He maintains yearly continuing education requirements which evaluate his proficiency and keep his knowledge and skills up to date. "It is very important that the patient and owner are protected by the license of the practitioner," stresses Dr. Rivera.

Above all, it is important for a licensed veterinarian to perform acupuncture on pets. Untrained and unlicensed individuals performing acupuncture or other medical procedures could compromise the health and well-being of your pets. So do your homework and make sure the person performing the procedure is licensed. And as always consult with your WVMA member veterinarian about your pet's health!

When is it Appropriate to Use Acupuncture on a Horse and Who Should Perform the Procedure?

Does your horse suffer from pain associated with disease, stress, or any other health problem? If so, have you considered having acupuncture preformed on your horse by a licensed veterinarian? Acupuncture has been around for thousands of years and is becoming a more available treatment option to deal with pain and other conditions.

Acupuncture is a widely used treatment method that evolved from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Dr. Blohowiak from Great Lakes Equine Wellness Center, Hortonville, Wis. states that "TCM is a complete medical system and can be used to treat nearly any disease process." He explains the main idea of TCM is that disease is theoretically caused by a disruption in the flow of qi (pronounced "chee"), which Dr. Blohowiak describes as the "vital life energy that flows throughout the body." When the qi (energy flow) is too fast, slow, weak, or strong, disease can occur. By performing acupuncture the flow of qi will return to normal. With a smooth and normal qi flow, no disease will be present.

If you are thinking that acupuncture will be painful for your horse, you can now be reassured. Dr. Blohowiak says that the majority of his patients are relaxed during the procedure and really start to enjoy it! Generally, the procedure is painless but a tingling sensation can be noted around the needle insertion site.

There are many benefits to performing acupuncture in horses. Acupuncture relieves pain and can help with disease modification and overall health. Some diseases may actually respond better to acupuncture as compared to traditional medicine. As with almost any procedure comes a risk. "Although there is some risk involved with nearly every procedure, Dr. Blohowiak states that the risks with acupuncture are minimal, if any.

Dr. Blohowiak stresses that it is important for clients to know who is treating their horse. By receiving special certification in veterinary acupuncture, the veterinarian is prepared to select the precise and proper points to insert needles and maintain treatment for the proper length of time, both of which are crucial for successful acupuncture. As Dr. Blohowiak says “only those doctors with veterinary acupuncture specific training and licensure will be best prepared to be successful.”

To learn more about acupuncture in your horse, contact your local WVMA member veterinarian.