

Natural Medicine for Animals
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE

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NATURAL MEDICINE FOR ANIMALS
Veterinary Natural Medicine

Ever since the dawning of human kind, natural medicine has been available to man and he has made energetic use of it. In fact, it is well known that other species, less often credited with conscious thought, have sought out the benefits of plant medicine (pharmacognosy, e.g. horses) but it is man who has developed the art and science down the centuries and millennia.

[Herbal medicine](#) was the first to be exploited and all indigenous peoples the world over have their own tradition of herbal medicine, except perhaps the Eskimo/Inuit people! Instinctive selection of medicines would have been inherited from our earliest ancestors (see [zoopharmacognosy](#)).

[Acupuncture](#) followed, the principle being discovered, explored and exploited mainly in China starting out as a clumsy use of sharpened pieces of bone and developed into a refined system of medicine (along with herbal medicine and diet which form *essential* adjuncts to it).

A much later development, based on pure and meticulous scientific tests (on people) and observation was [homeopathy](#). This exploits the principle of 'like cures like' and employs extremely dilute remedies (which are therefore very safe) to stimulate and promote self healing.

Other systems of natural medicine, therapy and supportive techniques have developed down the centuries, including [Bach Flowers](#), [Tissue Salts](#), [Aromatherapy](#) (essential oils), Anthroposophy, [Crystal therapy](#), [Chiropractic](#), [Osteopathy](#), etc. All may have a part to play in helping a body back to health.

It is not widely known that all these therapies, while being very beneficial for man, are also not only available for animals but very much to their advantage (veterinary herbs, veterinary acupuncture and veterinary homeopathy). One or other of these or an integrated combination, depending upon the animal's

sensitivities and needs, may be employed to stimulate restoration of normal immune and healing function in an animal's body. The result of this can often be an astounding return to health in the face of both serious and non-serious, both acute and chronic disease situations. It is worthwhile looking at the two main systems of natural medicine available, Homeopathy and Acupuncture.

Veterinary Homeopathy

Since homeopathy uses mainly extremely dilute and 'energised' remedies it is both very safe and very powerful. Use of those medicines have no legal implications with regard to competition and do not have the 'suppressive' effect on disease that can accompany the use of modern medicines such as anti-inflammatory drugs. It exploits the principle of 'like cures like' (*similia similibus curentur*), meaning that a small dose of remedy capable of provoking in a healthy body a similar symptom picture to that of the disease in question, is able to promote restoration of health in the face of that disease. This principle is illustrated by the example of Penny, the 6-year-old Labrador, who had suffered a severe skin problem for a period of five-and-a-half years. She was scratching, nibbling and biting at her coat and skin. She had little hair on her body, her skin was hot, greasy, smelly, dark in appearance and there were several weeping sores. She could find little peace from the scratching, despite increasing doses of cortisone (steroid) tablets. Her skin problems were worse in hot weather or in a hot room, she exhibited a great thirst, she was very hungry and she sought out cool places to lie down. She was also a very wilful dog. Close questioning of her human companion revealed that the problem had become noticeable at about 5 months of age and had become progressively worse over the years, being only obvious in the summer at first and now all-year-round. Possible underlying factors were discussed in depth, including diet, lifestyle, use of chemicals, vaccination, etc.

Her homeopathic remedy was found to be *Sulphur* and she showed a seemingly miraculous recovery over the next three months. She is now a healthy happy dog, free of the side-effects of steroids and showing a bright, clean, luxurious coat. The happy case of Penny is far from unique but it must be borne in mind that not all cases recover, and there are some conditions which can only be helped at best, (e.g. kidney degeneration). The case does, however, illustrate the important *holistic* principles involved i.e. the importance of taking as a whole the mind, body, environment, diet and all other factors impinging on the patient, in order to arrive at a therapeutic strategy in vet homeopathy.

Veterinary Acupuncture

Part of *Traditional Chinese Medicine* (TCM), acupuncture has existed in one form or another for several thousand years. It is sadly often taken as a therapy in itself

in modern times but this is not the correct way to use it. It brings best results when used holistically, bringing in natural nutrition, lifestyle, and internal medicine (such as traditional herbs) as adjuncts to therapy. It is, used in this way, a very powerful and widely relevant form of treatment applicable to a wide-range of illnesses (used in the more 'scientific', reductionist and modern way, however, it is little more than a system of pain relief and alleviation of symptoms). The therapy is mainly carried out by use of needles which are well-accepted by animals. Often a series of treatment sessions are needed, in order to initiate effects.

Acupuncture works through the 'energy' realm of the body, balancing and regulating energy flow and function. This brings about harmony and balance in the immune and healing mechanisms of the body, initiating and releasing therapeutic effects commonly considered impossible under modern scientific theory. Needles can often be inserted in parts of the body far remote from the affected part.

Dollar the event horse provides a worthy example to illustrate the principle. He had been diagnosed, in 1992, as having a left hip arthritis, having been lame for 2 years. Since his case was considered hopeless, he came up for 'loss of use' on his insurance policy and was due for a life of retirement with lameness. Treatment by acupuncture and appropriate herbs was initiated in 1992, using needles in his hip area, down the affected leg, in his other hind leg, in both forelegs and in his neck and back. Electrical stimulation was applied to some of these needles. Western (traditional European) herbs were used to support the acupuncture, his diet was altered, his back and pelvis were adjusted (chiropractic manipulation) and his saddling and shoeing were explored fully. This is the very important holistic part of natural therapy and without which treatment can only be superficial at best. He staged a surprisingly rapid recovery, returning to full competitive eventing work, within two months and has been worked ever since, without mishap.

Toulouse the 10-year-old cat had during 1990 suffered a severe and disabling lameness in her right shoulder. This had trouble her for several months. She was not amenable to needling but instead took to the application of LASER to acupuncture points in her neck, in her back and in her forelimbs and feet. The laser therapy has been supported by homeopathic medicine. She has not experienced a full cure but over the last two or three years she has had occasional treatments when she needs it and it keeps her mobile and happy.

Troy the miniature short haired Dachshund also has reason to be grateful to acupuncture, herbal and homeopathic therapy. He suffered a disc prolapse (PID, IVD) in the summer of 1994 and lost the use of both hind legs. His bowel and bladder were not under control and he had failed to regain use of his legs in one month after the incident. He was given needle therapy at that time, using points in his back, his neck and his hind legs. Herbs and homeopathy were used to

Natural Medicine for Animals - AVMC

encourage healing of nerves and relief of the spasms resulting from the initial lesion. Within two weeks, feeling and activity returned to his legs. Within one month he was walking, at first with very stiff, straight hind legs but later more normally. He may suffer further disc problems, as happens in some cases, but he is now on preventive medication to lessen the likelihood of that occurring. He can't suffer a further incident in the same disc again, which will now have healed.

Vet acupuncture, in conjunction with appropriate natural internal medicine, is very effective in all species, for spinal and neck lesions, for rheumatic and arthritic and bone conditions, for 'recurrent ophthalmia' (ERU, Moonblindness, Recurrent Uveitis, Periodic Ophthalmia) in horses and in many immune-related problems. It has also produced very good effects in some cases of 'head shaking' (headshaking, headshaking) in horses.

Because natural medicine works via the body's own healing mechanisms and because those mechanisms are extremely powerful and competent, surprising results can be obtained. However, it is important that the therapies are administered only by a veterinary surgeon competent to use that therapy. It is illegal for a non-veterinarian to treat animals. It is also imperative that a holistic approach is taken, giving appropriate importance to mind and body together, and giving full significance to all functions affecting the animal's life such as lifestyle, management and feeding. It is the patient itself who is treated, not the symptoms and for that reason a therapy suited to that particular patient should be chosen and all factors which may prevent the patient's healing mechanism from operating correctly should be sought out and optimised.

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