



Hunter Hodges, DVM
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A native of Virginia, Dr. Hodges came to Greensboro in 1985 and graduated from UNCG with a Biology degree. He received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1997 from Tuskegee University in Alabama and currently co-owns Brassfield Animal Hospital. His interest in alternative medicine led him to get certifications in acupuncture and chiropractic which he has integrated into his practice to treat

dogs, horses and cats. He is a member of the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society, American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture, International Veterinary Chiropractic Association, NCVMA, AVMA, and AAEP.

Complementary & Alternative Therapy for Pets

The term complementary is used to indicate other modalities that are an adjunct to Western care and not only an alternative. Examples would be Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Herbal, Laser, etc. These modalities may provide alternative outcomes including reduction in medications needed, an option to surgery and fewer complications with treatments. Complementary modalities can enhance the quality of care that we can provide, and more importantly enhance the quality of life for our pets.

Imagine for a moment that your dog has significant osteoarthritis or a soft tissue injury. To develop a treatment plan with conventional Western medicine, one would first get a complete history, examine the pet and note any observations. Radiographs would be the most common diagnostic, followed with a treatment plan of restricted activity and anti-inflammatory medications scientifically proven to relieve this type of pain. At this point, a complementary therapy could be easily integrated into the plan. In caring for animals, my thought process is and always will be rooted in the principles learned in veterinary school, but I have also come to understand that to do what's best for my patients I have to keep an open mind and consider alternative therapies to complement the Western approach.

ACUPUNCTURE

Based on traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture aims to correct imbalances in the body's Qi (energy flow) that are believed to cause health problems. In Western terms it is believed that pain impulses can be blocked before reaching the brain or that the brain

can be stimulated to release powerful endorphins to ease pain. Very fine needles are inserted under the skin and left for 15-20 minutes which is well tolerated by most animals. Other techniques may involve mild electric currents (electroacupuncture), liquid vitamin injections (aquapuncture) and even lasers to stimulate points.

CHIROPRACTIC

Involves careful and accurate manipulation of joints of the spine and extremities to help re-establish proper alignment, reset joint receptors and increase range of motion. Ninety percent of the input to the nervous system is from joint and stretch receptors located in tendons, ligaments and muscles. The nervous system runs the whole animal, therefore, managing the nervous system through these receptors can provide efficient and accurate care. When a more normal range of motion is re-established by the adjustment, the animal can move in a more comfortable and coordinated manner. Symptoms like abnormal gait, back pain and reluctance to jump or climb stairs will often improve.

LASER

Laser therapy is the painless use of laser energy to generate a photochemical response in damaged or dysfunctional tissue. Laser therapy can alleviate pain, reduce inflammation and accelerate recovery from a wide range of acute and chronic conditions. As rehabilitation specialists know, the main goal of treatment for many painful, debilitating conditions is to facilitate improved function and mobility. Laser therapy is a drug-free, surgery-free technique to help make that goal a reality.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

The use of complementary medicine has been growing very rapidly for the past 10 years and as more people utilize it for their own health, they naturally seek it out for their pets. Owners frequently will not notice the effects of complementary treatments until several days after the procedure and in some cases it may take multiple treatments to see changes. The complexity of each case often determines the number of treatments needed and the frequency. So the next time your pet has an injury, ask your veterinarian if there are any complementary (alternative) therapies that may aid in the healing process, and then find a veterinarian that has received the appropriate training and certifications.

BRASSFIELD
Animal Hospital



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