



### Ralph Yerex, DVM

Dr. Ralph Yerex received his B.S. from University of Wisconsin (River Falls) followed by his BVMS from Glasgow University College of Veterinary Medicine in Glasgow (Scotland) in 1989. Dr. Yerex then completed a Teaching Internship at The Ohio State College of Veterinary

Medicine (Visiting Scholar Program). He has been in private practice since 1990. Dr. Yerex and Dr. Hunter Hodges started Brassfield Animal Hospital in 1997.

Dr. Yerex is married, has one daughter, five dogs, and one cat. He is active with Animal Rescue and Foster Program and is currently Vice President of the Greensboro Chapter of The Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club.

## LASER THERAPY FOR YOUR PET

**Q: My older dog is having issues with arthritis in his spine and hips. He is currently on anti-inflammatory medication and glucosamine. What else can be done to make him more comfortable?**

A: Class Four laser therapy is another non-medication option that is available to the veterinary practitioner for use in treating various disorders, including arthritis.

The first studies of laser therapy were done about forty years ago. Since then, thousands of studies have shown the positive effects laser light has on cells and different body tissues.

Laser light is classified by its power levels. Class 3 therapy lasers are below 1 watt in power. Class 4 is from 1 watt to 20 watts. The power level, frequency of the laser light, and pulsation of the light are used to allow for the best therapy possible. Advances in technology have allowed this modality to be more accessible to the veterinary practitioner.

**Q: Are there any side effects to treatment?**

A: Currently there are no side effects known to using a therapy laser. However, laser therapy should not be used in close proximity to tissues affected by cancer.

**Q: What can be treated with laser therapy?**

A: Laser therapy can be used to treat a variety of injuries such as healing wounds, fractures, neurological and dermatological conditions. We also use our Class 4 laser to treat patients that suffer from arthritis pain and inflammation. If your pet is recovering from an injury, healing from a wound or surgery, or simply aging, laser therapy has been shown to provide relief and speed healing.

**Q: How long does treatment take.**

A: Usually treatments take less than one-half hour. Length of treatment is determined by different protocols which are based on what disease the patient is being treated for, how large the patient is, hair color and length, skin color, and what areas are being treated. Some protocols are as short as one to two treatments. Some protocols

consist of multiple treatments over two to three weeks. For treating spinal arthritis, we will recommend treating two to three times a week for a total of six treatments.

**Q: What is involved in a "treatment"?**

A: The laser light is transmitted from a base unit through a flexible fiber-optic cable to a hand-piece. This hand-piece is moved over the tissue area being treated. As the laser therapy is being administered most patients relax, the almost immediate pain relief and warmth allows patients to become more comfortable and initial anxiety then dissipates.

**Q: Will my pet need to be shaved in the area of treatment?**

A: No. The computer protocols set in to the machine before treatment take into account the hair color, skin color and even hair length.

**Q: How does it work?**

A: The laser light is transmitted by the unit and is transferred into the tissues being treated. The tissues absorb the photons or "packets" of light into the cells. These packets are then absorbed by the mitochondria of the cells. The mitochondria of each cell is the the cells' "power house". The interaction between the mitochondria and the laser light cause a chemical change termed, "photo-bio-modulation", which increases cellular energy, known as ATP. Injured and impaired cells produce lower amounts of ATP than normal cells. By increasing the ATP present in the cells, we allow the injured and impaired cells the extra energy to repair and heal. This allows for healthier cells, healthier tissues and healthier patients.

**Q: What will I need to do at home after treatment.**

A: Depending on what tissue and problem is being treated, your veterinarian will direct you as to the home care instructions with regard to activity after treatment.

**Q: When can I expect to see an improvement in my pet's condition?**

A: You may see relief after the first or second treatment as pain and inflammation are reduced. For joint conditions you may see increased mobility and activity in just a few days. For wounds and dermatological conditions, faster healing times, drier skin and a more relaxed and comfortable pet may be noted. Since each condition and each issue being treated is different, improvement will be based on the condition's complexity and treatment length.



See ad for Brassfield Animal Hospital of Greensboro on page 25.