

Pain therapy for animals

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Is your pet or horse in pain?

It can be difficult to recognise signs of pain in animals, and many are often put down to natural changes associated with ageing. However, they include:

- ◆ **lameness**
- ◆ **'favouring'/ holding up a limb**
- ◆ **stiffness**
- ◆ **being slow to rise**
- ◆ **loss of enthusiasm**
- ◆ **loss of stamina**
- ◆ **crying out and panting**

Horses also show other signs such as

- ◆ **being 'cold backed'**
- ◆ **changes in gait**
- ◆ **difficulty uniting in canter**
- ◆ **resenting grooming**

Animals experience pain for lots of different reasons. Athletic animals such as horses and working dogs can suffer muscle strains, soft tissue injuries and muscle spasm, and older animals often have reduced mobility and pain associated with arthritis.

As well as affecting mobility and the ability to exercise and perform as an athlete, pain can affect appetite, sleep patterns, and behaviour. Suffering pain reduces an animal's quality of life enormously and can also make him more prone to infections and other diseases.

Rehabilitation

Following injuries or operations, pain and scarring can reduce an animal's ability to use it's limbs and muscles properly, and long term mobility problems and stiffness can result.

Rehabilitation can help prevent this, assisting animals to regain mobility. Acupuncture can be used together with massage, exercises and other physical therapies to encourage proper mobility of healing tissues. Appropriate exercise regimes are also important, and affected animals benefit from an individual convalescent plan.

Animals that can benefit from such an approach include those that have had:

- ◆ **joint, limb or back injuries**
- ◆ **joint, limb or back surgery**
- ◆ **muscle sprains or other injuries**
- ◆ **poor saddling causing back problems**
- ◆ **poor farriery causing reduced mobility**

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a corner stone of traditional Chinese medicine, and has been practiced on animals for thousands of years. With scientific evidence supporting it's use for treating pain, it has become a more common therapy in the west.

It is most often used to treat pain and to relieve muscle spasm, but can also be used in the treatment of a range of other conditions including some types of skin, digestive and bladder diseases.

Acupuncture involves placing very fine sterile needles through the skin in positions where they can have an affect on the animal's nervous system. The needles are so fine that pets and horses don't normally resent them, in fact some animals find acupuncture treatment relaxing or even mildly sedating. The needles are left in for up to 20 minutes and then removed. Treatments are normally repeated weekly for 3 or 4 weeks and then at increasing intervals as the effect becomes more long-lasting. Animals with chronic disease may benefit from regular 'top-up' treatments every 3-4 months in the long term.

Acupuncture is very safe. Mild bruising may occasionally occur, and animals may experience a little muscle tenderness the day after treatment, though this passes quickly. Side effects are extremely rare.

At 'pain therapy for animals' Roberta can offer:

- ◆ **acupuncture treatment for relief of pain and muscle spasm**
- ◆ **physical therapies such as massage and exercises to improve and maintain mobility**
- ◆ **exercise regimes for rehabilitation and to maintain fitness**
- ◆ **advice on medications**
- ◆ **advice on food supplements**
- ◆ **nutritional advice**
- ◆ **saddle and tack assessment for horses**
- ◆ **home visits- treating pets and horses in familiar surroundings**

- could your horse or pet benefit? For more information please get in touch.

Roberta Baxter qualified as a Vet in 1993 and a Veterinary Acupuncturist in 2001. She has worked in Norfolk and Suffolk for over 13 years, combining conventional veterinary treatment of horses and small animals with acupuncture and other therapies.

Whilst continuing to work in veterinary practice, Roberta can also treat pain and associated conditions in horses and pets in East Anglia on a referral basis.

She will liase closely with the animals' own veterinary surgeon regarding each animal's ongoing treatment.

Roberta is a member of: the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, British Veterinary Association, British Equine Veterinary Association and the Association of British Veterinary Acupuncturists