

**Animal Hospital of Ovilla  
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### **What is Traditional Chinese Medicine?**

Commonly referred to as Eastern medicine, TCM (or in this case, Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine or TCVM) looks at health as a “balanced state” of the body. Disease is an “unbalanced state” or a state of disharmony. It includes the areas of acupuncture and herbal therapy and has been practiced for over 7000 years. Western medicine, in contrast, is based on the scientific method, supported by rigorous and peer-reviewed research.

### **What is acupuncture?**

Acupuncture, in its simplest sense, is the treatment of conditions or symptoms by the insertion of very fine needles into specific points on the body in order to produce a response. Acupuncture points can also be stimulated without the use of needles, using techniques known as acupressure, moxibustion, cupping, or by the application of heat, cold, water, laser, ultrasound, or other means at the discretion of the practitioner.

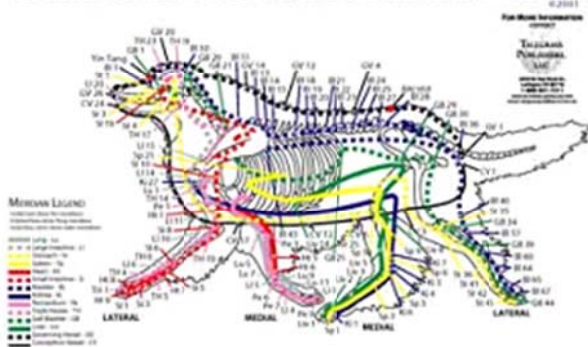
The specific acupuncture points have been well charted for both humans and animals, and were conceptualized by ancient Chinese scholars to be connected with each other and various internal organs via meridians or channels. Many of these channels trace the paths of the body's major nerve trunks.

Each acupuncture point has specific actions when stimulated. Combinations of points are often stimulated to take advantage of synergistic reactions between them. Which acupuncture points are stimulated, the depth of needle insertion, the type of stimulation applied to the needles, and the duration of each treatment session depends on the patient's tolerance and the condition being treated.



## What is the history of acupuncture in veterinary medicine?

### CANINE ACUPRESSURE MERIDIAN CHART



Acupressure Training Photos courtesy of  
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Acupuncture is an ancient form of medical treatment, and is believed to have possibly originated in India at least 7000 years ago. The development of acupuncture into the extraordinarily effective tool it is today probably began in the earliest dynasties of China. Jesuit missionaries brought acupuncture to Europe from the Orient in the late seventeenth century, where it has continued to be used to varying degrees. In North America, the use of acupuncture outside of Asian-American communities was infrequent until the early 1970s.

Since then, as more clinical research has been conducted showing positive results in the

treatment of both animals and humans, its use has been increasing. Most published reports on veterinary acupuncture originate in France, Austria, China, Belgium, Australia, Taiwan, and the United States.

In North America, acupuncture as an organized form of veterinary medicine has been in existence since approximately 1975, when the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (IVAS) was founded. IVAS conducts regular courses, seminars, and conferences, and has established high standards for assessing the competency of practitioners through an accreditation program.

## Who practices veterinary acupuncture?

Because of the differences in anatomy, and the potential for harm if the treatments are done incorrectly, only a properly trained veterinarian should perform acupuncture on animals. Dr. Stephanie Gorman has completed extensive training through IVAS so that she can perform these treatments safely and appropriately.

## What conditions are most often treated with acupuncture?

In veterinary medicine, there is evidence of the success of acupuncture for treating disorders of the reproductive, musculoskeletal, neurologic, pulmonary, gastrointestinal and dermatologic systems. The most common conditions that are treated include traumatic nerve injuries, intervertebral disk disease, degenerative myelopathy, epilepsy and other central nervous system disorders; asthma, allergic dermatitis, lick granulomas; and chronic pain such as that caused by degenerative joint disease. Acupuncture can also be used in conjunction with Western medicine, for example to reduce pain and inflammation while Western techniques treat an underlying condition.

## How successful is acupuncture?

The success of the treatment of chronic conditions will vary according to the disorder being treated and the number and frequency of acupuncture treatments. The earlier in the course of disease that acupuncture is started and the more numerous and frequent the treatments, the better the response tends to be. As a very rough guide, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of patients show major improvement,  $\frac{1}{2}$  show significant improvement but still have some symptoms, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  show little or no benefit.

## How safe is acupuncture?

Acupuncture should never be administered without a proper veterinary diagnosis and an ongoing assessment of the patient's condition and response to any prior treatment. We will always advocate using western techniques to attempt diagnosis before implementing any acupuncture treatments.

This is critical because acupuncture is capable of masking pain or other clinical signs and may delay proper diagnosis once treatment has begun. Elimination of pain may lead to increased activity on the part of the animal, thus delaying healing or worsening the original condition.

With most acupuncture treatments, multiple acupuncture points are stimulated at the same time, taking advantage of the interactive response to stimulation. However, if the points are chosen incorrectly, if the needles are inserted to the wrong depth, or if the duration of treatment is inappropriate, the patient's condition may on occasion worsen.

In the hands of a knowledgeable veterinary acupuncturist, adverse reactions are rare, but may occur. Such reactions may include mild transient bruising or swelling at the needle insertion site; a mild worsening of the condition for a short time (usually 24 to 48 hours); difficulty removing needles because of muscle spasm; injury to an underlying tissue or organ; and infection at the needle site. Certain acupuncture points are contraindicated in pregnant animals. Caution is exercised if certain drugs such as narcotics or corticosteroids are being used, or if the animal has a clotting disorder.



## What is the cost of acupuncture?

Comprehensive acupuncture treatment involves a thorough history taking and physical examination, followed by a patient assessment and formulation of a treatment plan. It rarely involves a single visit, and costs will vary according to the specific condition being treated, the equipment required and the response of the patient. There are additional fees if additional techniques are employed, such as electro-acupuncture, laser therapy, aquapuncture (the act of injecting vitamin B12 into the acupuncture points), and laser therapy.

## What is the appointment process?

The client must first fill out a detailed TCVM exam form for the doctor to review before scheduling the exam. Once the doctor determines if the pet is a candidate for acupuncture, the exam will be scheduled; this is longer than a typical Western exam. At that time the doctor will create a treatment plan, and possibly complete the first treatment. Further treatments will be scheduled on a drop-off basis – the client will check the pet in with a technician who will ask about the pet's tolerance of the past treatment, and then the client will pick up the pet later that day once the treatment has been completed.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by: Steve Marsden, DVM ND MSOM LAc DipICH AHG, Shawn Messonnier, DVM, Cheryl Yuill, DVM, MSc, CVH, and Animal Hospital of Ovilla.*

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