



Companion Animal Newsletter - SEPTEMBER 2019

ANIMAL ACUPUNCTURE



Long recognised in human health, how many of us have thought about acupuncture in relation to the health of our pets? Animal acupuncture is an effective therapy in modern veterinary medicine.

What is acupuncture? Acupuncture is the insertion of needles into specific points of the body to produce a healing response. This involves stimulating repair mechanisms within your pet's immune system, nervous system and hormonal and cellular systems. Administered in a quiet, calm environment, the therapy is tolerated very well and often very much enjoyed by the recipient!

Under UK law animal acupuncture may only be administered by appropriately qualified veterinary surgeons. Here at Dalehead Veterinary Group, vet Sharon Leak (pictured left) is appropriately qualified in acupuncture therapy, and we are now offering this service to our patients with fantastic results.

Especially useful in chronic conditions, the therapy can be effective for many complaints:

- Chronic pain (from many origins)
- Gastro Intestinal problems
- Chronic respiratory disease
- Some behavioural problems (often pain related)
- Chronic fatigue or eye disease
- Incontinence, heart or liver disease
- Nutritional (e.g. IBD)

Working as a team with our owners and their pets, our aim is always for pain free, happy and healthy animals. Managing chronic conditions can be challenging and it is finding the right treatment path for your individual pet; whether medication, diet, complementary therapy or a combination of all the above. With Sharon's help acupuncture can be a key therapy to help as Rhubarb (pictured bottom right) can confirm!

After initial assessment a tailored treatment plan is formulated to suit your pet's needs. Sessions are generally 30 minutes long on a weekly basis for up to 6 weeks, with follow on top up sessions if required. As a recognised therapy, acupuncture is very often covered by insurance, although owners would need to check their own pet's individual policy.



For more information about our veterinary acupuncture service, please contact us.

BONDING YOUR RABBIT

We always advise keeping rabbits in pairs or small groups as they are very social animals. In the wild a rabbit would never be alone, a rabbit that is alone and rejected from a warren in the wild may just go off and die. This has been documented.

A rabbit on its own in a domestic environment may be more stressed and prone to gut stasis and it denies it the natural relationship with one of its own kind. Once you have kept rabbits together then you will realise what they get from each other and won't ever want to keep them alone again.

Saying that, you do get the odd rabbit that does seem to prefer being on its own and refuses to be bonded with another, but this is the exception rather than the rule. It is better to try, than to have not tried.

Under the animal welfare act 2006 it is your duty, as an animal keeper, to ensure your animal has a suitable environment and be able to express normal behaviour patterns. One of the clauses is also to be housed with or apart from other animals (as applicable). However there is no specific code of practice in England as to how this exactly applies. For rabbits, really this should be to be housed with or near another of its own kind. Certainly if you are thinking of taking a rabbit on, you should really prepare yourself to keep two.

To keep two rabbits together both should be neutered, even with same sex pairs. This reduces fighting, prevents pregnancy and makes bonding much easier.



Bonding rabbits can take time and does require patience, but you should not give up if it doesn't work immediately. Some pairings can take up to 3 months, but they can still work very well and become very strongly bonded after all this time.

Some people advocate 'stress bonding' such as taking them for a car ride in a confined carrier together or confining them in a small, neutral space such as a bathroom. Personally I think this can be too stressful for the rabbits so prefer slow careful bonding if space allows.

Some people don't recommend bonding two neutered males, but it's the character of the rabbits that's most important. One of my best bonded pairs was a pair of males! Each rabbit is very different and should be treated as such.

Having recently lost my lop-eared rabbit I needed to rebond my Lionhead, Lyle, with another. He went very quiet and lost interest in life when Bert was put to sleep. He didn't even really want to have free time in the garden.



I found another female neutered rabbit, Flora, who was hopefully going to be his new partner.

I collected Flora and set up the runs so that they could come close to each other, but still had a gap between them. Sometimes they will nip each other's noses, causing damage, so it is a good idea to allow them to be able to smell each other but not make direct contact initially.

Being able to smell each other is really important to rabbits. Getting used to each others scent is perhaps the most important thing for them. It can be a good idea to swap over hutches/ runs so they can get used to each other's smell. I did this with Lyle and Flora so they were swapped over in the runs to have a good smell of each other's scent.

You may find the rabbits start to sit near each other. They may ignore each other. These are good signs. If they are showing any signs of aggression you may just have to sit back and be patient until these signs reduce. This can take a few weeks, but may be quite quick. With Lyle and Flora they showed no signs of aggression and started sitting near each other within a few days.

After a few days I pushed the runs a bit closer so that they could have some nose contact. They actually weren't that bothered with each other. There were still no signs of aggression and they seemed to want to sit near each other. You may get aggressive signs such as trying to lunge at each other, tail and bottom very upright or just running up and down after each other. If you get any of these signs you will have to wait and allow them to step back if needed. You can still keep swapping the runs over though so they get used to the scent.

Once they are showing no signs of aggression then some contact time can be allowed. This may be possible by letting them both out in a garden, so there is plenty of space to get away from each other if needed. With Lyle and Flora I have a system of tunnels and runs so there is plenty of space within the system and several bedding areas, to get away from each other. I actually just let them in together and they ignored each other! Over a few days they started to spend time together and start to wash each other, but absolutely no aggression. They have been with each other ever since. This took only 3 weeks and is by far the easiest bonding I have ever done. I was just lucky with the combination, but be prepared to take as long as it needs and don't rush it.

Just remember even the best bonded rabbits can have a falling out and ensure there is always plenty of space in a run area for them to get away from each other as necessary.

If you need any advice just ask us.

RAIN RAIN GO AWAY

Well hasn't the weather been miserable? It must be said that when the rain is pouring, taking our four legged friends for a walk isn't always our job of choice! Of course our dogs need exercise, fresh air and to do their 'necessaries' but there are also other ways to keep them active when the rain clouds hover:

- **SEARCH & SNIFF:** Hide treats around your home to set your dog off on a tail wagging adventure. Your dog will put his nose to work to find the hidden treasures. You can determine how easy or difficult you want the game to be depending on where you decide to hide them.
- **Schedule a puppy play date:** Call some puppy pals and surprise your dog with a visit from one of his four-legged furry friends.
- **Kong:** Kong has a range of natural rubber toys which allow treats to be stuffed inside. The toys provide hours of entertainment for your dog as well as mental stimulation. The taste and smell encourages chewing and the unpredictable bounce deflects the dogs hunting instinct into joyful pursuit and harmless chewing.
- **Toy Time:** Playing with your dog with their toys is always fun for them. A game of fetch down the hallway, tug of war or just encouraging tricks and commands will build the bond with your dog but also mentally stimulate them.
- **Interactive Dog Feeder:** Inter-active dog feeders and puzzles are a great way to keep your canine occupied.
- **Teach an old dog some new tricks:** On sunnier days you're more likely to visit the park than sit at home teaching your dog new tricks so rainy days are great for catching up on all those things you set aside for another day. Reinforce training and commands, practice tricks your dog already knows and teach them some new ones too!
- **Dental Chews:** Dental chew treats are ideal for keeping dogs busy whilst also cleaning their teeth, but check the calorie content!
- **Shopping Trip:** Take your dog out to a dog friendly shop to browse and shop on a gloomy day.
- **Netflix and Chill:** Ok, maybe this one isn't as much for your dog... You can still spend quality time with your dog and keep them entertained while catching up on a few shows cuddled up on the sofa or a rug in front of the fire together. As long as you have a chew toy or bone nearby, your dog is bound to enjoy a little down time next to his human.



SHOW TIME!!

We attended our first show of the season at Malham on Saturday the 24th August. We had a fantastic day and thankfully the sun shone!! Thank you to everyone who came to see us and who got involved with our **'Draw a Friend for our Bunny Competition'**.

We will continue to run the competition at Bentham Show on 7th September and Hodder Valley Show on 14th September. As you can see from the article on the next page, all bunnies need a friend and ours is lonely!

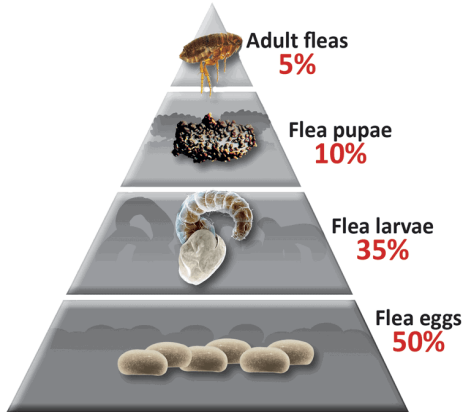
All entries will be judged at the end of the show season and the winner will be presented with a mystery prize.

We hope to see as many of you as possible at our stand so call in for a brew, piece of cake and a chat and to pick up a goody bag for your dog or cat.



FLEA PATROL

95% of fleas live as immature stages in the pet's surroundings²



During the last month we have seen a significant increase in the number of clients coming to the practice seeking advice for flea infestations on their pets and in their homes. As the summer progresses the flea population grows and untreated animals become a target for adult fleas emerging from pupation. It should be stressed that fleas are not just a summer problem, the development of central heating in our homes has allowed the flea population to continue their life cycle 365 days a year.

The saying goes that 'prevention is better than cure' and when dealing with fleas this is certainly the case. If you are unfortunate enough to see fleas or flea dirt on your pet you are in fact only seeing 5% of the problem. The remaining 95% of the flea population is present in the environment in different stages of the flea lifecycle, as eggs, larvae and pupae. An adult female flea lays 50 eggs a day, so by the time adult fleas become noticeable on your pet there could already be thousands of developing fleas in the environment.

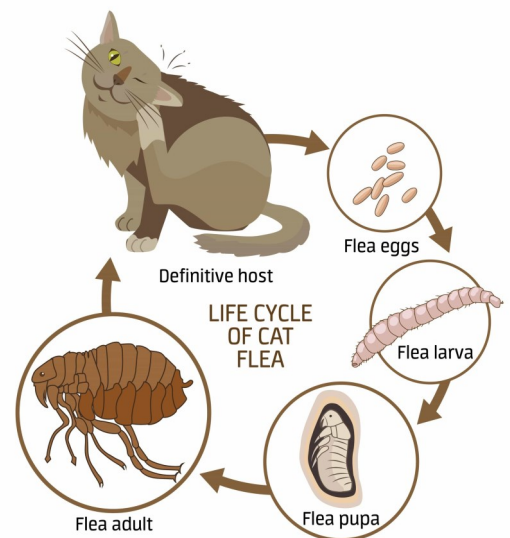
First things first, let's prevent these female adult fleas from populating our home with fertile flea eggs! If your pet has been seen by a vet at the practice within the last 15 months we are able to supply you with one of our recommended, highly effective prescription only parasite control (POM-V) products which are only available from veterinary practices.

The treatments we use at the practice are prescribed based on your pet's health, weight and lifestyle and administering them at the correct interval ensures continuous protection against flea and tick infestations. The active ingredients ensure a rapid kill of the adult flea (and ticks) whilst rendering any eggs laid by female fleas to be infertile and thus break the flea lifecycle. Pets should be allowed full access to all areas in the home where they usually frequent because by allowing access to areas which may already harbour a flea infestation, any newly emerging adult fleas are quickly picked up and treated in this manner, killing the adult and neutralising their eggs.

This is the start of the battle against the infestation! The second attack is on the home. A prescription only household spray will target adult fleas, eggs and larvae but NOT the pupae stage of the life cycle, there is no product available on the market which can impregnate and neutralise flea pupae. Ensure adequate spray is used, Hoover the carpets and floors prior to treatment to stimulate fleas into emerging as they feel the vibration caused by the vacuum cleaner. Make sure that you treat under furniture, around skirting boards and any other nooks and crannies. Soft furnishings should also be treated or washed at 60°C to kill fleas. If material is not suitable to be washed at this temperature it can be frozen first and then washed at the directed temperature. Vacuuming the home more than usual will also remove several lifecycles of the flea from your home. After each session the bag or cylinder should be removed disallowing fleas access back into the home.

Once a flea infestation occurs it can take at least 6 months to eradicate the flea population from your home. Ensuring your pet is continuously protected against fleas is the much preferred and cost effective course of action as well as providing other health benefits for your pet. Fleas and ticks can transmit diseases to your pet (and to you) and the tapeworm *Dipylidium caninum* uses the flea as an intermediate host, so a pet which has fleas is almost certainly exposed to tapeworm through grooming where fleas are accidentally ingested. We would usually advise worming your pet if they are known to have flea infestation.

Having fleas in your home is not a pleasant experience but we are here to help and provide you with the most up to date advice, guidance and treatments.



Macmillan Coffee Morning Friday September 27th 2019

One to put in your diary! We are once again supporting The Macmillan Coffee Morning. We have some very talented bakers on our team and their delicious creations will be available **11am – 2pm**.

We hope to see as many of you as possible to raise money for this amazing cause!



Check out our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

