

Holistic Veterinary Medicine

By Dr. Rose DiLeva VMD MS CVCP CVA



Dr. DeLeva with her husband and family dog

Holistic Veterinary Medicine is an all-encompassing approach to treatment in pets in which all aspects of the patient's life are taken into consideration. The holistic veterinary practitioner will do a comprehensive conventional physical examination first. They will assess all body systems,

including, but not limited to, eyes, ears, heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, oral cavity, and abdomen, as well as, skin and fur condition. The holistic veterinarian will also take into consideration all other aspects of the pet's life. She or he will want to know about their diet, diet history, environment, genetics, behaviors, emotional status, stress level, relationship with the owner and with other dogs, prior medical problems, prior vaccinations, and their daily routine. Additionally, the holistic practitioner will utilize their senses. For example, it is possible to smell a yeast infection, which is often found on the skin or in the ears. Certain medical conditions, such as parvovirus, also have a very distinctive odor. Holistic veterinary medicine involves all aspects of your pet's well-being and looks for the underlying cause of the problem rather than treating only the symptoms.

Holistic veterinary medicine has a broad definition. It includes a number of different holistic modalities, such as acupuncture, aquapuncture, moxibustion, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chinese herbs, western herbs, chiropractic, orthopedic manipulation, nutritional therapy, homeopathy, aromatherapy, reiki, massage, Gold Bead implants, holistic cancer treatments and low level laser therapies. With all these possibilities (there are more than what's listed), the holistic veterinarian can formulate a treatment plan utilizing both conventional and integrative assessments. Conditions that can benefit from holistic therapies are numerous. Acupuncture, for example, can benefit musculoskeletal conditions such as hip dysplasia, intervertebral disc disease, arthritis, patellar luxation, spondylosis and anterior cruciate ligament ruptures. It can also help with the side effects in pets undergoing chemotherapy or radiation. These patients often develop a low white blood cell count or become anemic. There are specific acupuncture points on the body that improve and often normalize those abnormal blood values.

Holistic veterinarians are also concerned with the vaccine status of their patients. For years it was recommended that dogs and cats be vaccinated yearly. Unfortunately, many conventional veterinarians still abide by this practice. The American Veterinary Medical Association has changed their recommendations by increasing the intervals between vaccinations. I have an issue with this situation because it's the manufacturer of the vaccines that makes the recommendations about frequency, not a veterinarian. Remember, the more vaccines a company sells the bigger their profits. Over-vaccination can cause seizures, autoimmune disease and allergies. A holistic veterinarian would offer a titer test. We are fortunate to now have a laboratory blood test that measures antibodies to distemper, adenovirus and parvovirus. If the dog has antibodies to those viruses it is not necessary to vaccinate them that year because they still have protection against those viruses. To find a holistic veterinarian in your area go to www.AHVMA.org (American Holistic Veterinary Association).



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