

Acupuncture and Acupressure

Acupuncture and acupressure treatments have been helpful in treating a number of conditions including:

- Pain resulting from arthritis, spondylosis, and many other conditions
- Head-tilt symptoms
- Chronic GI slowdowns
- Heart, liver, and kidney failure

As stated in the introduction to this section, I am not suggesting acupuncture or acupressure instead of proven traditional treatments. However, you may wish to use them in conjunction with traditional treatments or in cases where traditional treatment is not adequate.

Acupuncture and acupressure are based on the concept that the body has an orderly arrangement of energy lines, called meridians, running through it. Disease occurs when these energy lines are blocked, weakened, or deficient in some way. Acupuncture points are points along these meridians, each of which is associated with a specific part of the body or organ system. Acupuncture points are arranged symmetrically, with corresponding points on the left and right sides of the body.

In acupuncture therapy, special solid metal needles are inserted in the acupuncture point or points that are associated with the physical problems being treated. Needles are left in place for roughly 15 minutes, during which time they stimulate the flow of energy through these points. Despite the use of needles, acupuncture is relatively painless. Occasionally, a rabbit will object to placement of one or two needles in particular. Certain points seem to stimulate this response in most rabbits while others may actually indicate a point that **needs** stimulation. Sometimes a needle can be inserted in the corresponding point on the opposite side of the body without causing the same reaction.

You **may** notice improvement after only one acupuncture treatment, but often it takes three to eight treatments to fairly determine whether acupuncture is benefiting your rabbit. You should be willing to try a minimum of three to four treatments before giving up on the healing possibilities of acupuncture.

Acupressure is based on the same principles as acupuncture and is often described as acupuncture without needles. In acupressure, stimulation of the same acupuncture points is done using gentle finger pressure. Because it is non-invasive, acupressure is something you can learn to do for your rabbit. Your acupuncturist may show you how to do this between acupuncture treatments — if not, ask if this would be helpful!

Many holistic veterinarians combine acupuncture, acupressure, chiropractic, and herbal treatments to treat a variety of conditions. As with all veterinarians, it is important to make sure that your holistic veterinarian has some familiarity with rabbit anatomy.

Murray is nearly always relaxed during his acupuncture treatments. In fact, the first time he ever tooth-purred for me was during a treatment. (Photo by Randy Kidd, DVM)

