



# Coombefield Veterinary Hospital

## Equine Newsletter

### April 2015

## Acupuncture



We are pleased to announce the addition of acupuncture clinics to the list of our services. Philippa Burg, our trained veterinary acupuncturist, is happy to see your horse either at home or at our Summerleaze clinic.

Acupuncture has gained increasing recognition and popularity as a useful adjunct to modern medicine in animals as well as humans. Acupuncture (*acus* – needle, *punctura* – puncture) is usually defined as ‘the insertion of a solid needle into the body for the purposes of treating disease’. Under UK law acupuncture of animals may only be performed by appropriately qualified veterinary surgeons.

Acupuncture can be divided into two approaches: Traditional Chinese Medicine, which aims to restore balance between the physical, emotional and spiritual factors and is considered a holistic approach, and the Western Method, which describes the action of acupuncture in terms of the nervous and hormonal systems. We combine both of these approaches.

### **How Does Acupuncture Work?**

Acupuncture works by stimulating the nervous system having both analgesic (pain relieving) and non-analgesic effects. Acupuncture stimulates the release of the body’s natural pain relieving and anti-inflammatory substances. In particular, the body releases endorphins which are natural painkillers. Needling also stimulates the release of other potent neurotransmitters that promote nerve growth, increase blood flow and encourage healing.

### **How Can Acupuncture Help?**

Acupuncture can be used to treat a wide variety of conditions in all animals. It is not a miracle cure but can be successful in managing many conditions alongside conventional therapy.

In horses acupuncture is most commonly used for:

1. Musculoskeletal problems
  - Back and neck pain
  - Sacroiliac pain
  - Pain relief in cases of arthritis
  - Tendon and ligament disease
2. Respiratory problems
3. Skin disorders



### **How Will My Animal React?**

Acupuncture is performed with sterile thin stainless steel needles. There is occasionally a brief moment of sensitivity as the needle penetrates the skin but once the needles are in place most animals relax.

Not all animals (or humans) respond to acupuncture. About 10-20% of animals are 'non-responders' but this can't be determined until treatment has commenced. Some animals are very sensitive to treatment and require only brief light needling while others may need stronger stimulation.

It is possible to see worsening of signs (in painful conditions) after treatment and subsequent treatments will be altered accordingly.

A very small number of animals will require light sedation before needle placement if they are nervous or very painful. Sedation will not alter the animals response to treatment.

### **How Often and How Long?**

Acupuncture is usually carried out once a week for between four and six treatment to assess the effects. After the initial course treatment frequency will be altered depending on the animals response and may require maintenance treatments monthly or a few times a year.

The first consultation can take up to one hour. Following history taking an examination is performed before acupuncture needles are placed into appropriate points. The needles are left in place for 5-20 minutes.

Acupuncture can be useful to augment conventional veterinary treatment.

**For more information or to book an initial consultation please contact our equine department at Summerleaze.**



[www.facebook.com/CoombeFieldEquineDepartment](http://www.facebook.com/CoombeFieldEquineDepartment)

### **EQUINE INFO**

If you would like to speak to an Equine vet or arrange a visit

Please ring 01297 630515

Medicines can be requested via email or by telephone

**Email: [farm@axvets.co.uk](mailto:farm@axvets.co.uk)**