

Drug Free Alternatives For Your Race Horse

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The aim of Physical Therapy is to improve function by promoting health and healing through natural physiologic processes. Acupuncture and therapeutic ultrasound are the mainstays of my Equine Physical Therapy practice.

Acupuncture

The physical benefits of acupuncture are potent and realized immediately.

Acupuncture can improve comfort and attitude, thus possibly transforming mediocre performance into a winning performance. Treating chronic lameness and injuries, including muscle soreness, enhances the body's ability to heal itself rapidly.

Acupuncture acts as an analgesic giving pain relief. Acupuncture points corresponding to specific nerves and blood vessels are normally located in the surface depressions along and between muscles. These areas are supplied by concentrations of nerve endings and nerve bundles. When the veterinarian properly stimulates

these points, pain and discomfort in th targeted areas is reduced. The acupuncture needle creates a micro injury that prompts small nerve fibers to send messages to spinal cord. The spinal cord then releases neurotransmitters that block pain messages. The brain also releases

* B-endorphins into the blood stream and spinal column. The endorphins increase the overall serotonin level, helping to block pain.



* B-endorphins are reportedly 10-100 times more potent than morphine. They are our natural pain killers and our "feel good hormones" that promote relaxation. If your horse has flexible, tension free, and fatigue free muscles, this maximizes their potential. Relaxed horses feel better, and therefore perform better with fewer injuries.

Acupuncture naturally stimulates the immune system by releasing various hormones. These hormones help the animal to respond to injury and stress. Cortisol is one of the compounds triggered by acupuncture. Natural cortisol is an anti-inflammatory agent.

The addition, acupuncture increases the circulation, rhythm and stroke volume of the heart. Moreover, it promotes red and white blood cell production, and boosts blood flow and nerve conduction via vasodilation.

The needle is a fine gauge-it is very slim and flexible. The needles are normally left in place 5-30 minutes; electrostimulation can be added for analgesia when dealing with chronic pain. Low voltage electric current stimulation of the needles provides additional pain relief and muscle relaxation by activating *B-endorphins from a different area of the brain.

Acupuncture is an excellent tool for the diagnosis of lameness. It enables veterinarians to treat its primary cause and the secondary consequences. It is now considered complimentary therapy.

Drug Alternatives cont.

Equine acupuncture is a safe and time-tested medical procedure that helps treat:

Musculoskeletal ailments

- Cold Back Syndrome
- Undiagnosable lameness
- Laminitis
- Navicular Disease

Respiratory problems

- “Bleeders”
- COPD/Hay dust cough/Hay allergy
- Chronic nasal discharges, cough, heaves

Reproductive System conditions

- Infertility & PMS

Gastrointestinal Disturbances

- Colic

Ultrasound

Ultrasound is a physical therapy treatment for tendon and ligament injuries. It also helps to control the pain connected with arthritic joints. Human physical therapy modalities have employed it for 20 years. Extensive research confirms its benefits. It allows tendon injuries to heal more rapidly, and it promotes collagen fiber formation to maximize the long term ultimate tensile strength of the tendon.

Ultrasound, acoustic energy, stimulates cellular activity by increasing cellular protein synthesis. Its high frequency sound waves cause mechanical vibrations that micro massage at a cellular level. Ultrasound waves act on deep tissue (3-5 inches) as a non-thermal agent in muscular-skeletal injuries. As treatments deliver non-thermal effects physiological changes take place in the tissues. These non-thermal effects make this a unique and versatile therapy. Ultrasound effectively treats joint conditions and soft tissue



injuries, as well as chronic conditions. It promotes healing of sores and surgical wounds by improving vascularization, decreasing swelling and resolving them with minimal fibrosis. A veterinary evaluation is necessary to determine the involved tissue and the stage of tissue healing before treatment begins. Since the effects depend on the power and frequency applied, Ultrasound application requires skilled practitioners.

Conditions which can benefit from ultrasound therapy are:

- Tendinitis & desmitis
- Sore feet & laminitis
- Muscular back pain
- Wound healing & reduction of scar tissue
- Pain & muscle spasm
- Reduction of swelling
- Racing Soreness
- Hoof abscesses

In my short association with NYRA, as a regulatory veterinarian, I saw horses prior to their race. Most horses, as elite athletes, benefit from drug free alternatives. These treatments relax them and make them feel good, and in turn enhance their performance, with fewer injuries. A comprehensive plan can be designed with the trainer and attending Veterinarian for each individual horse.

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