

(W)HOLISTIC PET CARE

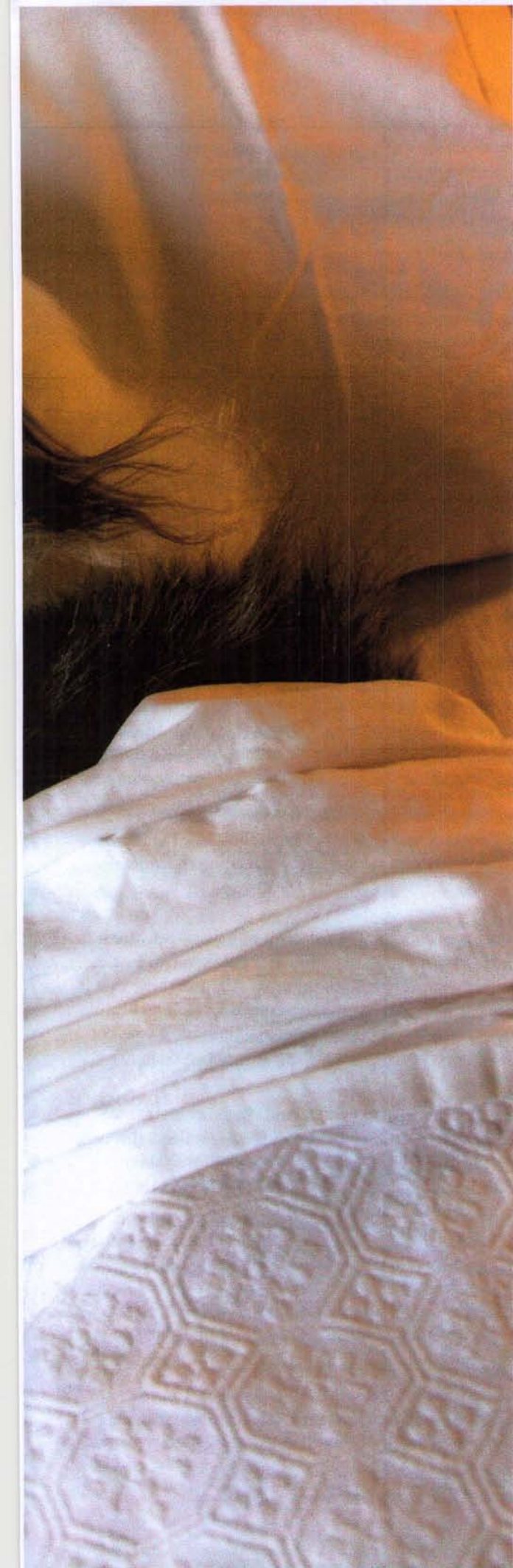
by Dr Jean-Paul Ly



Dr Jean-Paul Ly [BVSc (Syd), Dip. Ed (Syd), Dip. Clinical Nutrition (Syd), Cert. Counselling]. Dr Ly is a veterinary surgeon and the Group Director of The Animal Recovery Centre. He is also the director and clinical nutritionist of Addiction Foods, an international holistic pet food company.

While Dr Ly is a Western-trained vet, he is no stranger to complementary and alternative medicine. He did research into acupuncture from 1970 – 1972, and he was the first vet in Australia to practise veterinary acupuncture.

From 1975 to 1980, he was an equine acupuncturist to the Australian racing industry. Today, Dr Ly applies his knowledge and expertise at The Animal Recovery Centre, a veterinary clinic and hospital which adopts the holistic approach as its central philosophy for pet care.



In this article, Dr Jean-Paul Ly from The Animal Recovery Centre discusses the principles and practice of holistic pet care.

The Meaning of the Word (W)holistic

This article is about holistic pet care. You may or may not have heard about it, but that doesn't really matter. The important thing is, after reading this article, I hope you will view pet care in a totally different light, and that you would treat your animal friend in a way that would best ensure his/her/its well-being.

Before we address the issue of holistic pet care, we have to understand the meaning of the word 'holistic'. Originally, the word 'holistic' was spelled as 'wholistic', and I am only mentioning this because the original word encapsulates the intended meaning of the word better. By 'wholistic', we refer to the whole person and not just the parts to this person. As such, in the case of humans, when we treat a person 'wholistically', we do not just treat the body part that is malfunctioning; instead, we treat the whole person, and that includes components such as his mental and emotional state. In the same vibe, holistic pet care is caring for your pet as a total being.

Since the original word is no longer in use, I shall compromise by using the current version of the word; but I do hope that the message I am going to convey here will not be compromised in any way.

The Philosophy behind Holistic Pet Care

In holistic pet care, the focus is not on the use of drugs and surgery to treat the animal. Instead, the focus is on the patient, which in this case, would refer to the dog or cat that has fallen ill. The premise of holistic pet care is that the patient heals from within, and that it is neither the drug nor the doctor that causes the animal that is unwell to recover.

All illnesses arise because of imbalance within the internal system. As such, the role of a veterinary surgeon is not to prescribe overly-powerful antibiotics indiscriminately, but to provide for a nurturing environment for the animals to heal on their own. In that sense, the vet's duty is to set up the balance which the pet is lacking. Drugs do not provide balance; they only provide temporary relief.

The Methods of Holistic Pet Care

I need to emphasise here that holistic pet care does not exclude Western medicine. Every form of treatment has its benefits. Decrying the benefits of Western medicine is just as misguided as dismissing complementary and alternative medicine as hogwash.

Holistic medicine is about being patient-focused; as such, whatever works best for the patient is the therapy that



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the doctor should prescribe. An acupuncturist who insists that the patient undergoes acupuncture treatment due to the needs of his ego is as deplorable as an allopathic doctor who prescribes antibiotics due to his self-interests. In both instances, the medical practitioners are not putting their patients' interests first.

In holistic pet care, we treat animals in the same way we treat humans. We address issues of food and nutrition, supplementation, immunology, absorption, toxin handling etc. In many instances, once we address these issues, the animals recover without the need for extended drug use.

Where necessary, we might recommend TCM, homeopathy or even surgery – what I am driving at here is that we take the interests of the pets first, and prescribe what works best for them. The biggest mistake any practitioner can make is to put their own interests before that of the patient's.

Effectiveness of CAM on Animals

One question I have frequently been asked is whether therapies such as acupuncture and homeopathy actually work for animals. My answer is a resounding 'yes', since the effects are visible for everyone to see.

Unlike in human beings, where the perceived recovery might be due to the placebo effect, animals do not have preconceived notions as to whether a form of therapy

will work for them. Animals do not believe or disbelieve methods such as acupuncture; acupuncture is either effective or ineffective. Our belief system does not validate or invalidate the efficacy of science, and in the case of animals, this is all the more true.

How to Care for Your Pet

What you feed to your pet accounts for 70 – 80% of the well-being of your animal, with water being the most important nutrient. It is then only commonsensical that you should hydrate your pet often, and ensure that they drink adequate amounts of quality water. Other than that, you should also remember that dietary management and supplementation have a direct impact on your dog's or cat's health. Therefore, it is only logical that all pet owners should start young with the animals: a healthy and balanced diet consisting of a mix of meats, vegetables and fruits is as relevant to an animal as it is to a human.

Many pet owners mistakenly believe that processed food is the better choice for animals. I want to remind these owners of this salient fact: if processed food is detrimental to human health if taken on a daily basis, so will it be harmful to the animal should the latter be fed this kind of food every day. As with everything else in life, moderation is the key. Intake of processed foods should be balanced with the intake of natural and fresh foods.

There are tonnes of information online nowadays as to how to feed your animal friends. Pet owners will do themselves and their pets a great favour by familiarising themselves with the right way of feeding the animals.

TLC

The most important component of holistic pet care is what I will term as TLC, which is the acronym for tender, loving care. When a pet animal is sick, the thing that it desires most is to be with someone it loves. The healing power of touch cannot be over-emphasised. If your pet dog is sick, the greatest thing that you can do is to pat it lovingly.

I am a firm believer in TLC and the practice that we adopt at The Animal Recovery Centre reflects this belief. While we have the capacity to hospitalise about 50 to 60 animals at any one time, you will discover that the number of sick animals lodging with us usually does not exceed about 15.

Animals that are sick need to be with their owners more.

The Connection between Pets and Their Owners

Pets share an invisible energy connection with their owners and after being a vet for 35 years, I have discovered that there are really no coincidences. The clearest evidence of this connection is reflected by the

diseases these animals “adopt” from their caregivers.

It is not uncommon to find that dogs with heart diseases actually have owners who have heart diseases; correspondingly, dogs with diabetes actually have owners who have diabetes.

Of course, one can always argue that the diseases that these animals have only serve to reflect the lifestyles and diets that their owners have “imposed” on them. This is a logical explanation and I shall not attempt to dispute that.

It is only difficult to explain how the female dog I once treated actually had inguinal hernia on both the left and the right; and how incidentally, the two daughters of the owner also had inguinal hernia, one of them having it on the left, and the other having it on the right.

How's that for synchronicity?

Respecting Animals

I am of the belief that you should respect and love the animals that you keep. For that reason, neither my vets nor I myself will carry out procedures that are deemed harmful to the animals.

Nature has given animals their body parts for a reason. As such, The Animal Recovery Centre does not conduct procedures such as debarking or the docking of tails, even if such procedures promise good money to the centre.

A dog that barks incessantly can be trained to behave; ears should not be cropped no matter what.

Sterilisation should only be carried out for good reasons – it should only be allowed where there is a possibility of unwanted litter, when there is a likelihood that the animal would escape and mate with another, or when your pet is sexually charged or aggressive. It should never be taken in the name of disease prevention – doing so is not only a reflection of one's inability to understand the nature of disease, it is also an indication of how little credit we give Mother Nature in her creation.

Euthanasia

Some owners come to me and request euthanasia for their pets. Their animal pals are in pain, and it hurts the owners to see them in such a state.

As a matter of principle, I will only relent to this request if all other avenues have been exhausted. What I usually will do is to advise these owners to take their pets home, and to talk to them. Owners need to reassure their dogs and cats that they are fine, and that everything is okay. Because these canine and feline friends of yours live their lives for you; they are hanging often for your sake.

Tell them that you will miss them; and assure them that it is okay to let go. More often than not – and as reported

by my clients – your dog or cat will die off naturally, in the comfort of your presence. And this is all a dog or a cat will ever ask for.

Unconditional Love

Throughout this article, I have been using cats and dogs as examples, since they are the most common pets that people will keep. But that does not preclude other types of pets like fish or hamsters.

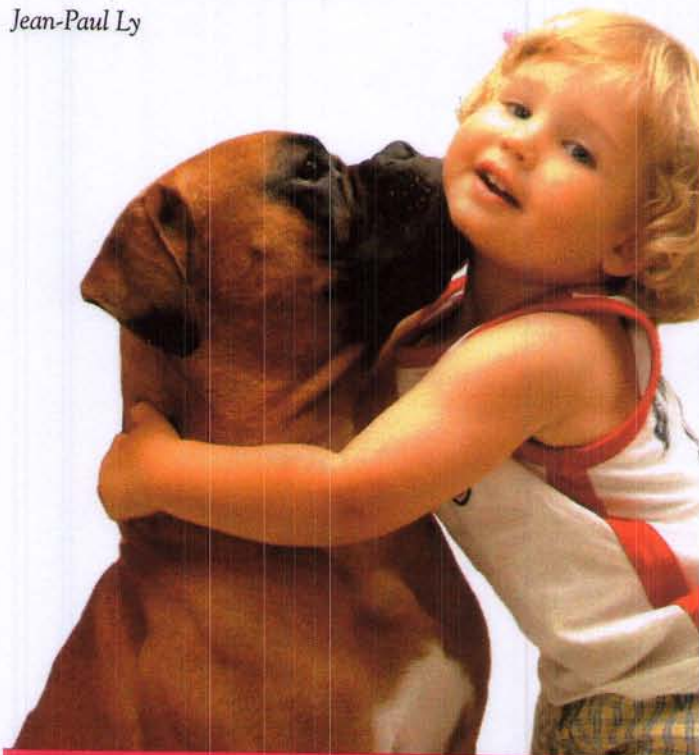
If humans are indeed the most evolved among all the species that populate the earth, we are unusually primitive in the way we treat one another, and how we treat animals. Your pet functions on the premise of unconditional love; even your humble tortoise will not call you a jerk if you do something stupid. And it is this love that can really be disarming.

You can beat and kick your dog, but at the end of the day, your dog will die for you if necessary. Perhaps it is time for us to learn something from our friends.

Finally

A pet is a lifetime commitment. And caring for your pet starts and ends with love. I hope you understand what I am driving at. With that, I sign off.

Jean-Paul Ly



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