

## **BURR RIDGE VETERINARY CLINIC P.C.**

client education program

### **ACUPUNCTURE IS OK FOR DOGS**

**BY LISA HANKS**

Shaking uncontrollably, his limbs jerking with erratic spasms, Prince lay on the floor of his home, unaware he was suffering from yet another epileptic attack. Afterward, the dazed and tired dog licked his concerned owner's face as she wondered what she could do to prevent his seizures.

Luckily, Prince's owner now has more options. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has given an alternative treatment method its seal of approval: acupuncture. Last fall a special committee of AVMA-member veterinarians met with three holistic veterinarians, who are leading members of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, to discuss the revision of the AVMA's *Guidelines for Alternative and Complementary Veterinary Medicine*. The guidelines detail the AVMA's official position on several alternative veterinary therapies, including acupuncture and acupressure, chiropractic therapy, physical therapy, massage therapy, homeopathy, botanical medicine and holistic veterinary medicine, which encompasses all of these therapies as well as conventional veterinary medicine, surgery and dentistry.

After carefully reviewing the current research and the viability of each alternative treatment, the special AVMA committee said, "Veterinary acupuncture and acutheraPy are now considered an integral part of veterinary medicine. These techniques should be regarded as surgical or medical procedures under state veterinary practice acts. It is recommended that educational programs be undertaken by veterinarians before they are considered competent to practice veterinary acupuncture."

### **HOW ACUPUNCTURE WORKS**

Acupuncture uses needles to stimulate specific reactive points on the body. The underlying techniques and analyses are taught using an ancient Chinese medical philosophy. It describes the treatments and health problems according to their *yin* and *yang* properties, loosely described as negative and positive traits. According to this philosophy, the body's energy field, or *chi*, is polarized between these two extremes. The body is healthy if it is balanced; excesses of yin or yang may encourage disease. Acupuncture and the Chinese herbs commonly used with it are designed to help the body achieve balance and restore health.

AcutheraPy stimulates the key points of the body with methods other than needles, such as gentle pressure, heat, injections of water or other substances, gold bead implantations, mild electrical currents, infrared or lasers and ultrasound. Acupuncture and acutheraPy have been used effectively to treat some forms of arthritis, allergies, skin problems, musculoskeletal problems, neurological problems (such as Prince's), chronic gastrointestinal diseases, chronic pain, stress, cataracts and autoimmune dysfunctions.

AVMA guidelines strongly advise veterinarians wishing to practice acupuncture to become adequately educated. Owners can find the best practitioner by contacting the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society for information on referrals to certified members. The Center for Veterinary Acupuncture also offers courses in veterinary acupuncture and will refer you to course graduates.