

healing touch for animals



by Sally Morgan

Are you looking for alternative therapies to relieve your older dog's joint pain? Has your horse's sore back made him difficult under saddle? Is your cat looking stiff and uncomfortable after her nightly romp outside? CranioSacral Therapy is one of the alternative therapies that may be the answer to these concerns, as well as an effective way to promote optimal wellness and performance in your animals.

Developed by Dr. John Upledger, CranioSacral Therapy is a gentle, hands-on method of evaluating and enhancing the function of the physiological body system called the craniosacral system, which is comprised of the membranes and cerebrospinal fluid that surround the brain and spinal cord. CranioSacral therapists use a very light touch, five grams or the weight of a nickel, to provide very deep work. Since the craniosacral system directly affects the central nervous system, an imbalance there can cause any number of sensory, motor or neurological disabilities. CranioSacral Therapy helps correct those restrictions by engaging the body's self-healing mechanisms, so that the body can release the effects of injury, pain and stress.

Many conditions can be addressed with CranioSacral Therapy: arthritis, spine and neck injuries, lameness, head injuries, TMJ/jaw pain, chronic joint and spine pain, Cancer, hip dysplasia, Lyme Disease, EPM, systemic disorders, post-surgical recovery, nerve irritations, laryngeal paralysis, behavior problems (such as bucking and running away in horses, or fear biting in dogs), and emotional problems. Animals can become stressed from pain, age and deteriorating health, as well as from the hectic lives of their caretakers. A low level of anxiety from stress puts the animal in the fight/flight response. CranioSacral Therapy helps restore a balance between fight/flight and rest/digest responses of the central nervous system.

A typical session lasts about an hour and pets choose a comfortable position, often lying down, for the session. Horses sometimes need to move a bit as they facilitate releases, so it is best for them not to be simply tied up for a treatment. Animals are very relaxed and many fall deeply asleep for a portion of the session.

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HELP FOR HORSES


Horse riders may have noticed that sometimes an issue in the rider's body shows up in the horse's body. Frequently restrictions in a rider's hips will cause a stiff gait in the horse, because the rider's weight and tightness limit the ability of the horse to translate motion through his spine from his hind legs. In this case, evaluation and treatment with CranioSacral Therapy for the horse and rider together has shown improvements in performance and relief of discomfort for both partners. Horses also frequently have problems with the jaw joint resulting in teeth grinding, pulling at the bit, and difficulty eating. CranioSacral Therapy can often resolve these problems, as well as head shaking caused by chronic nerve irritation in the face, mouth and jaw.

One aged Morgan mare had complications from founder, which is inflammation of the laminae in the hoof—a condition that can flare up from stress or injury. This horse did a split in the pasture, and misaligned her hind end. The resulting limp created more stress on her hooves. Her owner reports, "In only three sessions, she was able to walk outside without her Easyboots, and she began to play with the other horses. She has been prancing in the aisle when she goes out and I know she feels good." For this horse, CranioSacral Therapy also had the added benefit of improving her metabolism so that she could lose excess weight as well.

HELP FOR DOGS


Dogs suffering with hip dysplasia have shown improved gait and less pain after several sessions of CranioSacral Therapy. For older dogs facing laryngeal paralysis, or difficulty with the muscles in the airway, CranioSacral Therapy can delay or prevent surgery in some cases, by relieving strain on the cranial nerves where they exit the brain, and relaxing muscle spasms in the area of the throat.

One dog with laryngeal paralysis was able to avoid surgery and maintain a good quality of life in his senior years. His caretaker said, "I can't believe the difference this work has made for my dog. After each session, he acts like a puppy and I can barely hold him back when he wants to run up the mountain on his walks. Before CranioSacral Therapy, I thought




Vitamins for All Life Styles
Natural Bodycare
Gourmet Coffee & Cheese
Whole Foods

a whole food store



Thornes Market
150 Main Street
Northampton, MA 01060



we would have to put him to sleep. I was so impressed with the work that I received CranioSacral Therapy for myself when I experienced low back pain."

HELP FOR CATS

Because CranioSacral work enhances fluid exchange throughout the body's systems, it can be beneficial for older cats with kidney dysfunction. Older cats can also get relief for achey arthritic joints, and injured animals can get faster recovery with CranioSacral treatments. A cat who apparently fell from a tree was diagnosed with a torn hamstring muscle that the vet thought would need surgical repair. Her owner wanted to try CranioSacral Therapy first to relieve the cat's pain so she could eat. After two sessions, the cat no longer required surgery, was soon able to leap onto the furniture, and within a few weeks she was able to go outside safely.

Another cat who had been severely injured in a car accident, years before she was adopted, had paralysis in the nerves and muscles on one side of her face, a limp, and her owner believed she had a chronic headache. She kept to herself and did not socialize with the other cats. After the cat had two CranioSacral sessions, her caretaker reported, "Emma is doing so much better. You can tell

she has less pain and she actually comes to us to be petted and interacts more with the other cats. I can't believe the change in her personality."

CranioSacral Therapy truly can transform animals' lives. It is a new approach for reducing stress and promoting renewed health and vitality in companion animals and horses. ▲

The Upledger Institute currently offers two classes in equine work and will offer training for laypeople in small animal work next year. They can be reached at (800) 233-5880 or www.upledger.com. Sally Morgan, located in Northampton, MA, is an Upledger certified CranioSacral Therapist and presenter, physical therapist, and reiki master that specializes in treating animals and their people. She is certified in TTouch and TTEAM, and has authored chapters on physical therapy and CranioSacral Therapy for Linda Tellington-Jones' new book on TTouch for humans.

Sally is a Centered Riding Instructor, USDF Bronze Medalist, and FEI dressage rider. Her licensed therapy dog, Comet, often works with her. Sally Morgan can be reached at 413/586-5058, or 413/237-6177 and sallymorgan69@msn.com. She is available for private sessions, clinics, courses, and lectures.