



# An Introduction to **Natural Therapies** for **Animals**

by Eileen McLean

## TIPS FOR A HEALTHY, HAPPY DOG & CAT

As pet owners and industry professionals we all want to ensure that our animals lead long, happy, healthy lives. By addressing eight of the most important aspects of a pet's life, and combining the very best of conventional and holistic pet care, we can absolutely achieve a healthy, happy pet.

### **Natural Diet**

BARF and similar styled homemade recipes including supplements to ensure a completely healthy diet, and good quality foods with no by-products, artificial additives or preservatives are becoming increasingly popular and in demand as pet owners take more interest in reading pet food labels. Food allergies and overweight pets are becoming the 'norm' so it is very important to understand exactly what ingredients we are putting into our pet's bodies. A huge range of natural treats are available and more and more pet establishments are stocking these kinds of pet yummys.

### **Supplements**

There is great interest in nutritional supplements for pets such as fatty acids, fish oils and joint support to help make our animals healthier and more comfortable. It is important to make correct choices, based on your pet's particular needs, age, lifestyle and symptoms. It is of course best to purchase natural, food based supplements that the body readily recognises and can metabolise than cheaper, more synthetic supplements, which may not be beneficial in the long term and a waste of money. Research what is available and speak to your vet, natural animal therapist or friendly pet store before selecting nutritional supplements for your pet.

### **Parasites**

Internal and external parasites can be managed easily and effectively by all manner of products available on the market, conventional and natural.

Fresh, raw pumpkin seeds and wheat germ oil can both be given at a dose of 1/2 teaspoon per 4.5kg to help rid the body of intestinal parasites efficiently.

There is a lot of controversy around the idea of feeding pets garlic to help deter parasites. Some pet owners and vets readily use and recommend it, swearing that it works wonderfully with no ill effects. It is suggested by many that a large amount of garlic would need to be consumed in order to cause anaemia or other suggested problems, and that perhaps using chemical based insecticides is far more detrimental to pet health than the herb. Others, however, believe that the risk of toxicity far outweighs the benefits. Speak to your veterinarian if you have concerns about feeding garlic, fresh or powdered. A safe recommended dose for most dogs is 4g per 10kg body weight except in cases of animals with a history of anaemia or scheduled surgery, when it should be avoided.

Homeopathic remedies such as cina for intestinal worms, and animal specific herbal tonics are also available to effectively help treat and prevent parasites including worms and fleas.

### **Exercise and interaction**

Play! You don't have to walk your dog to exercise and interact. Throw a ball in the yard, visit a dog park or dog friendly beach, or play tug of war in the kitchen. Have a training session, join a dog club or visit your local doggy day care centre. As for the feline friend, purchase some cat toys or make your

own to toss around the lounge room with your kitty. It's a great stress reliever to play, increases your heart rate and gets you active and outdoors. Fun for the whole family!

### **Grooming**

Not only does brushing your pet daily produce a nice looking companion, it also encourages good hygiene. Grooming helps to promote good skin and coat health, and gives you the opportunity to look for fleas and ticks, and to check for any abnormalities such as lumps or discharges. Handle your pet's feet regularly so claw clipping isn't an ordeal for either of you next time they need trimming, check ears and eyes, open the mouth, and roll your pet over so examination times can be as stress free as possible, and any changes can be detected early.

### **Veterinarians**

Select a veterinarian who is open to exploring all approaches when it comes to pet health. Consult with a few different vets and choose one who not only provides optimal care but communicates effectively and is willing to answer your questions. They should be happy to consult with other veterinarians and animal practitioners such as specialists, chiropractors, acupuncturists and natural therapists as you, the pet owner, requires. Your vet should be interested in continuing their own education and have a genuine love of all animals from junior to senior.

### **Health**

Annual check ups are an important part of pet life and give the vet an opportunity to listen to their heart, check their teeth, take their temperature, weigh them and give them a general look over. Annual checkups help to ensure early diagnoses of any health problems or conditions associated with aging animals. It may not be necessary to vaccinate your pet annually and this controversial topic should be researched and discussed with your vet. Titer testing is available, and involves blood being taken and the antibodies measured to see if a booster is required. Over vaccinating can have adverse effects on some animals, especially those with skin problems, inflammatory conditions and other health issues.

### **TLC**

Animals are an important part of many people's lives and many are considered vital members of the family. Touch such as patting a dog has proven therapeutic benefits such as relaxation, slower heart rate, and reduced blood pressure. A kind word, pat or cuddle is just as rewarding to your pet as it is to you so remember to acknowledge the animals in your life in a positive way daily.

Please note that the recommendations in this article are a guide only and are not a substitute for veterinary care. Please consult with your veterinarian in regards to your pet's specific health needs.

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