



CRITTERS

You & Your Pets

Every Saturday, The Daily News offers fun features and practical advice for you and your little-or sometimes big!-best friends in our Critters column. If you'd like to submit an idea or make a comment, write to Critters, New York Daily News Features Dept., 450 West 33 Street, New York, NY 10001.

A touching way to help pets

Therapy that feels good & helps heal

by **Amy Sacks**

DAILY NEWS WRITER

BO IS a strong-willed beagle who can navigate his way through the chaotic streets of Times Square. But at the ripe age of 12, the stubborn dog has become a little stiff and a lot less confident.

In an effort to improve his quality of life, Bo receives monthly TTouch sessions that help the elderly dog regain energy, balance and sense of self. And the treatments feel sooooo good.

"You can just tell he's loving it. He's so at rest," said owner Steve Gruber, communications director for the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals of the gentle hands-on healing method that sends Bo into a peaceful trance.

Short for Tellington Touch, TTouch is a method based on circular movements of the fingers and hands all over the body, intended to activate cell function and awaken the body.

It was developed by animal trainer and behaviorist Linda Tellington-Jones, and is based on the Feldenkrais Method, a series of stretching exercises that help people have greater range of motion and gain confidence and self-awareness.

Along with acupuncture and acupressure, TTouch is among a growing number of alternative healing methods - including Reiki, magnet therapy, flower essences and chiropractic - increasingly used by veterinarians, practitioners and pet owners.

Unlike massage or petting, TTouch works on the skin rather than the muscle level to enhance the immune system and help the body heal. It is said to help with aging issues, such as arthritis, and pain and wellness issues, including separation anxiety, balance and pain relief. It can also speed recovery from illness, shock, surgery or other injuries.

"I think people are really looking for the alternative to the more hard-core methods of training and medication," said Mary Bruce, co-founder of Mindful Tails Inc., which provides TTouch for training, rehabilitation and wellness. Prozac, she said, seems a common prescription for animals these days that clients are eager to move away from.

Bruce, from Manhattan, and her partner, Peggy Marks, from Long Island, are two of only three certified TTouch practitioners in the metro New York area. In tandem, the duo works on animals - ranging from cats and dogs to frogs and goats - to help them overcome behavioral issues such as barking and chewing; separation anxiety, and fears such as riding in cars, thunderstorms and vet visits.

The practitioners' new TTouch in Rescue Workshops program trains volunteers at animal shelters, who in turn help shelter animals adjust to their chaotic environment. This not only helps the animals but also makes them more adoptable.



Bo the Beagle, 12, shown wearing a TTouch body wrap, relaxes at home during a TTouch hands-on healing treatment.

The hands-on healing can also help disabled animals with limited life expectancy. Lotus, a cat at the Angel's Gate Hospice on Long Island, was crib-bound from a birth defect and couldn't use her front legs.

"By the time we went through several sessions, she could use her back legs to move around," Marks said.

While TTouch can be used all over the body, practitioners focus on some seemingly out-of-the-way places, such as the pads of the gums and the ears.

Ear touch, for instance, is used to help distressed animals, especially cats. The ear contains a wealth of pressure points controlling the entire body. Gently stroking the ear between thumb and fingers can help with digestion, circulation and the immune system. It can even help bring an animal out of shock.

Cats, however, can be sensitive to touch. In those cases, Marks and Bruce also use Reiki, a system of natural healing that channels energy to rebalance the body.

At \$65 per session, TTouch and Reiki don't come cheap. "But it's worth it," Bruce said. "They feel good, and love it."

To find out more about TTouch or workshops open to the public, visit
www.mitails.com.

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http://www.nydailynews.com/city_life/story/502222p-423533c.html
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