

Alternative Medicine

At the moment alternative medicine is a rather controversial subject and much attention is paid to it. Alternative medicine includes acupuncture, chiropractic, physical therapy, homeopathy, botanical medicine, nutraceutical medicine and holistic medicine. The American Veterinary Medical Association defines holistic medicine as a comprehensive approach to health care employing alternative and conventional diagnostic and therapeutic modalities. Some veterinarians acknowledge that these treatments may be useful. The AVMA has issued guidelines, stating that they should be used only by licensed veterinarians educated in the modalities employed.

Glucosamine is one nutraceutical which is being used extensively for arthritic conditions to relieve pain and help restore mobility. Herbal medicine has been used for thousands of years. Many dog breeders give raspberry tea to pregnant bitches — evidence suggests that it has an effect on the

uterus. According to folklore, garlic can be used for almost any ailment or parasite. Cascara is laxative officially recognized by the United States Pharmacopoeia.

It must be remembered that all medicines and herbal products may be toxic, even lethal, if given in improper amounts. Large doses of vitamins may have unwanted side effects. Scientific studies are necessary to establish safety, efficacy and tolerability.

Another consideration is the placebo effect — a “cure” may be psychologically induced — an inert product might give the same results as the drug.

Alternative methods should only be used after consultation with a veterinarian. He or she should have up-to-date information and give advice pro and con about treatment.

Old Age

Aging results in progressive reduction of the ability to withstand stress and disease and we see white hairs and usually reduced activity level.

In humans, an “aged person” is over 75 years. In dogs, the signs of aging appear at different ages, depending on the size of the animal. Small breeds, which mature rather fast, may be “grown up” by 12 months of age and become geriatric at 13 years. Large breeds may continue growing for two or three years, but they become “old” at 9 or 10 years.

There are only “educated guesses” when we try to translate dog or cat years to human years. It has been said that a 14-year-old dog is the equivalent of a 72-year-old human. Some say that one “people” year is the same as seven cat years, but this really isn’t correct — a better guess is that a 15-year-old cat is equivalent to a 75-year-old person.

Annual veterinary check-ups are recommended for older animals. Some exercise is a requirement — “use it or lose it.” Also, although not a proven fact, obesity probably reduces life expectancy.

Book Review

The Complete Dog Book, Revised 19th Edition. Howell Book House, \$32.95

This classic publication of the American Kennel Club contains pictures,

historical information and the official AKS standard for each of 146 breeds recognized by AKC. An excellent glossary defines terms used in the text.

There is information about registration, conformation dogs shows and the many performance events held under AKC rules. In addition to the conformation title “Ch.,” there are 33 titles for other events. These include titles in obedience, hunting tests, field trials, herding tests, tracking, agility, earthdog and lure coursing. AKC’s Canine Good Citizen program is a fun, noncompetitive way to ensure that dogs are respected members of society. It is open to all dogs, purebred and mixed, and the 10 tests are designed to show that dogs can be well-behaved at home, in public and around other dogs.

There is a short chapter on training, including the five basic commands — Heel, Sit, Stay, Down, and Come. Obedience training should begin at four to six months, although it is never too late to train an older dog. Housebreaking is explained, including the direct method and paper training if there is not ready access to a yard. Most housebreaking problems arise when a soft-hearted owner allows an untrained puppy free run of the house. Confinement in a small area or crate is necessary for success. Suggestions for regular grooming include attention to the dog’s teeth, nails, ears, eyes and anal sacs.

The section on canine health and first aid covers the most common problems. Vaccination seems to be an overlooked subject. It is mentioned briefly — (distemper as the principal cause of sickness and death in unvaccinated dogs — vaccination to control parvovirus and leptospirosis — regular rabies vaccinations imperative for the protection of humans and dogs). Although there is currently some controversy, particularly in regard to the yearly “boosters” often recommended, the control of infectious diseases in puppies requires a vaccination program. This basic information is missing. Its importance should be stressed.

The Complete Dog Book is highly recommended as a source book for the dog owner or anyone thinking about owning a dog. Of its 800 pages, just over 600 are devoted to the AKC breeds. If you want accurate information about a breed, you will find it here. 🐾

Veterinarian’s Oath

Being admitted to profession of veterinary medicine,

I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health, the relief of animal suffering, the conservation of livestock resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge.

I will practice my profession conscientiously, with dignity, and in keeping with the principles of veterinary medical ethics.

I accept as a lifelong obligation the continual improvement of my professional knowledge and competence.

Adopted by the AVMA in July 1969