



Words: Anna Shawcross

THE HEALING TOUCH OF DOG OSTEOPATHY

Bone Deep: Unravelling the path to recovery.

We all like to see our beloved pets running and jumping around, but just like humans, dogs can suffer from aches and pains, pulled muscles and tired and sore joints.

If you suspect your dog is suffering from pain or aches caused by physical activity, it might be a good time to call in the dog osteopath!

What is a dog osteopath?

A dog osteopath - properly called a canine osteopath - practices a type of physical therapy treatment called osteopathy on dogs. The canine osteopath gently manipulates the dog's joints and muscles to relieve pain, improve mobility and restore good function.

What is Osteopathy?

Osteopathy is a physical therapy concerned with the correct workings of the musculoskeletal system, meaning bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments and all the things that help us move. It was originally developed for humans but is now very popular for animals, particularly dogs and horses.

Osteopathy is a holistic science, meaning it is concerned with the functioning of the body as a whole. It does not use medicines or invasive techniques but is based on gentle osteopathic techniques such as joint manipulation and massage.

How does it work on dogs?

Osteopathy works the same with dogs as it does with people. The osteopath will begin by looking for any apparent problems, changes in how the dog walks, runs or sits, or if your dog is avoiding any particular physical activity.

The osteopath will then use palpation (a sense of touch) to examine your dog, feeling for any problems in the way the bones are moving in the joints, sore or tender muscles or problems with posture before moving on to use gentle osteopathic techniques to treat the dog.

Are Osteopaths Qualified?

Osteopaths complete a minimum of 4 years of professional training before being able to practice on humans. They are employed by the NHS in the UK and recognised by most major health insurances, and in the USA a D.O. (Doctor of Osteopathy) is considered equivalent to an MD. Animal osteopaths then study a further level 7 qualification in animal osteopathy.

What are the signs my dog needs an Osteopath?

If you know your dog well, you'll normally notice when something doesn't look quite right. Just like humans, dogs compensate for an ache or pain by doing things differently. They might have changed how they walk or avoid certain movements like jumping or climbing

a certain way. For example, they might slow down and walk down a slope where they previously ran or hopped down steps.

You might also notice them licking a particular area of the body frequently. A particular area might be tender, or they may avoid you trying to touch it. In more extreme cases, you might feel your dog has 'gone off' physical activity altogether, appears to be in pain or upset shortly after starting, or has lost interest in walks, fetching or other physical activities.

Should I See a Vet Before Consulting a Canine Osteopath?

You don't need to see a vet before speaking to a canine osteopath, but you may choose to. Just like doctors and physiotherapists, vets and canine osteopaths will co-refer. So if your dog osteopath thinks your dog might have an issue that the vet needs to deal with, they will suggest you see the vet. Conversely, if your vet feels that the problem is purely musculoskeletal, they will recommend seeing a dog osteopath if you can. Both are qualified professionals who want the best for your animal.

Working Dogs and Osteopathy

Working dogs, such as dogs trained for hunting, sledge pulling or other intense activity, are more likely to benefit from a regular osteopathy session to deal with

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DOG OSTEOPATHY

any strains or weak areas in the body and keep them in top condition. Just as a professional athlete might have a regular session with a physiotherapist, osteopath or masseur to keep them in shape, dog osteopaths do the same for professional dogs!

What happens in a dog osteopathy session?

Although treatments will vary from case to case, dog osteopathy sessions will generally follow the same structure of settling your dog in, finding out the problem, and giving gentle hands-on therapy to relieve pain and improve function.

Some dog osteopaths will come to you, and some work from their houses or clinics.

Settling in and case history

Your dog will generally be excited to meet a new person, and any canine osteopathy session will begin with some settling in while the osteopath gets to know your dog and lets them calm down and get ready for the

session. During this time, the osteopath will also ask you questions about any issues you think your dog is having and any relevant medical history.

Diagnosis

Osteopaths - both human and animal - use a highly developed sense of touch called palpation to diagnose problems. Osteopaths are experts at feeling their way over the bones, joints, muscles and other soft tissues and noticing anything that doesn't feel right, a tight or tender muscle or anything else.

Your osteopath will examine your dog's entire body, not just parts that initially seem to be painful, as pain in one area may be caused by a problem elsewhere. As your osteopath examines your dog, they will discuss with you what they're finding and come towards a diagnosis of the problem. Osteopaths will strive to give you their best advice about your dog's condition.



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