



# House of Dreams

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[www.kittydreams.org](http://www.kittydreams.org)

An All Volunteer Operated No-Kill Cat Shelter

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## Is acupuncture the right treatment for your cat?

Dr. Isabel Wyss, DVM, of Acuvet PDX, is a veterinarian doctor trained in the modality of acupuncture, and it is she who has provided a great deal of information for this article. She has had great success with treating cats. Dr. Wyss comes to the home and has created a successful protocol to keep the kitties at ease. When she arrives at the home, she likes to sit cross-legged on the floor in front of the cat's caretaker. She then drapes a blanket over both laps and creates a cozy corral of sorts to contain the potentially spooked kitty. While the cat is in the loving arms of its caretaker, she will do the needling. Dr. Wyss will often begin the treatment with aquapuncture injections of vitamin B12 to help with nervousness and to support the cardiac and immune systems. The needles would



Coco

then be placed in specific points, depending upon the diagnoses of what is being treated. Dr. Wyss has found that the first experience can sometimes be a little hard, but by the third treatment the cats usually are ready for, and very accepting of, the treatment. There are clinics, as well, that offer acupuncture treatments in office, and depending upon the cat's personality, that may be just as good of an option as the in home treatments.

Acupuncture is a modality that was discovered in China over 4000 years ago. The first record of acupuncture being used on animals is from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The first animals to receive needling were work animals such as horses and dogs. Through the years of working on larger animals it has been adapted to be a useful modality for smaller animals, even birds and snakes!

Acupuncture is based upon the principle that we have life force (Qi) coursing through channels within our body, and when stagnation of Qi occurs, problems in the body arise. Acupuncture is when very small, fine needles are slipped into the skin at specific acupoints, and this action rarely elicits a pain response. Acupoints are not the size of the needle head, rather they are larger areas, in turn making it easier to stimulate. Another variation of acupuncture is called aquapuncture, which is the injection of a liquid, such as Vitamin B12, into the main acupoints. The act of stimulating these points brings blood flow to the area which perfuses the area with healing oxygen. It is also theorized that this stimulates the release of pain reducing hormones. It gets Qi flowing within the channels. When treating renal disorders acupuncture helps to stimulate the appetite, often this occurs very rapidly after the treatment.

Scientists studying how acupuncture works have found that many of the channels in which Qi flows are in fact vascular and nerve pathways. According to the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society, "Using functional MRI, to examine 15 different points, the basic tenets of acupuncture have been proven. Stimulation of these points result in specific changes in the central nervous system. It was shown that acupuncture points that have pain relieving properties associated with them tend to activate specific pain-association brainstem regions."

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In Dr. Wyss' experience of treating our feline friends, she has found that the most common ailments are renal disorders, irritable bowel syndrome and osteoarthritis. She often treats those who are recovering from surgery and for the side effects of cancer treatments. However, when treating for certain cancerous tumors, caution must be exercised when doing acupuncture. There is a potential of growing the tumor by supplying more blood to the area. The treatment plan, including how many times and how frequently the cat may need the acupuncture appointments, will be created upon diagnosis.

When you are choosing an acupuncturist for your furry friend, there are a few important things to consider. In the state of Oregon, the law requires the animal to be diagnosed by a veterinarian and in turn get a referral to be seen by an acupuncturist. This acupuncturist does not necessarily need to be trained in animal care; therefore, it is encouraged to seek out a veterinary acupuncturist who has formal training in the practice of veterinary care, and is certified as an acupuncturist. The International Veterinary Acupuncture Society website, [www.ivas.org](http://www.ivas.org), has an option to search for certified veterinary acupuncturists, or you can contact Dr. Wyss, the owner of Acuvet PDX, directly at 503-593-1016.

We all love our kitty friends and want to ensure they have the best possible life, and acupuncture can absolutely be another aspect of that happy and healthy life we want to provide for them. Just be sure to make informed decisions!