

OUR TOWN

Canine Acupuncture? Doc says dogs, horses can benefit

by Carolyn Braff

It is no secret that New Yorkers are passionate about their pets. But Dr. Babette Gladstein, V.M.D., has turned her passion into a career.

A licensed veterinarian specializing in physical therapy for animals, Gladstein uses alternative acupuncture, ultrasound, massage and chiropractic techniques to treat her patients. She says these practices are safe, ethical and effective.

"I'm so excited and exuberant about doing this work," said Gladstein, "I've seen such great results. I'm so happy to see the animals either drug free or pain free, or to give them a better quality of life. It's just the most rewarding thing I've ever done in my life."

Gladstein appreciates what it means to have a rewarding job since she began her professional life working in a profoundly unfulfilling field. A native New Yorker, Gladstein worked as a Wall Street broker for five years after she graduated from Hunter College.

"Making money just for making money as the only reward, there's not a lot of satisfaction in it," she said. "I felt I wasn't using my talent and my skill. I was very good with animals, I was very much interested in science, and I pursued what I desired to do in life."

Gladstein insisted that the jump from brokering to animal care is not as drastic a change as it may seem. She cultivated a love of animals from an early age and was always interested in scientific endeavors.

"I had dogs when I grew up, I owned horses a various times throughout my life and I actually had show cats at one point, Cornish hair show cats," she said. "I was very much interested in the medical aspects of taking care of the animals an bettering the breed. I even bred fish as a child. I was always interested in animals."

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Gladstein followed her pet passion to the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and completed her post-doctoral work in veterinary acupuncture at Colorado State University.

Although her practice is open to all animals, Gladstein says the nature of the treatment is particularly compatible with dogs and horses, her areas of specialization. The acupuncture treatment, most commonly used for musculoskeletal problems, releases endorphins into the bloodstream, and horses and dogs are able to easily "assimilate that feeling of endorphins into their overall personality," Gladstein said. "A cat is not amenable to having that feeling."

Ultrasound therapy uses acoustic energy to treat joint conditions and massage therapies correct misalignments in the animals and allow horses, in particular, to feel an increased range of motion. These alternative treatments can speed a patient's recovery time by one-half to two-thirds, the veterinarian said.

Gladstein served as the veterinarian on call at the 2005 Westminster Kennel Club

Dog Show and has been treating the pomeranian of Nole Marin, on of the judges on "America's Next Top Model", for more than a year. But she spends most of her time working with racehorses, where her alternative treatment are on the cutting edge.

"It's not a field that anyone's familiar with to any great degree," the East Sider said. There's no real regimented protocols available. I don't have a cookbook, like other veterinarians have cookbooks, of potential cures for disease. We're extrapolating from the human physical therapy marketplace."

Gladstein goes to one of the New York Racing Association's 3 tracks everyday, where she often finds herself a woman in a man's world. "I have to have a level of regularity to my existence that would not be expected of a man," she said. "In other words, I have to excel, I have to be there on time, I can never be late. There's a tremendous amount of pressure."

That pressure does not seem to have affected her work in the least, as she has treated Ghostzapper, the top racehorse in the world, in addition to several current Kentucky Derby prospects.

"It's wonderfully rewarding," Gladstein said. "There's nothing else you can do in veterinary medicine with no drugs that you can have this great an impact on the animal - and it's natural and it's helpful."

More information about these alternative treatments is available on Gladstein's Website, www.animalacupuncture.net.

Gladstein is licensed in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut and makes house calls within Manhattan. Pricing starts at about \$200 for dogs. For an appointment, call 212-828-5663.

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