

CANINE MASSAGE: THE HISTORY AND BENEFITS

Canine Massage has a Long History

Some may think canine massage is a new trend popping up with other alternative therapies. Not so. Julius Caesar insisted on having his dog massaged so much that he even traveled with a masseuse. The first known documentation of canine massage dates back to 2700 BC in China. These days it's not uncommon for K9s involved in combat to receive massage therapy. We are all familiar with the benefits of receiving massage therapy ourselves but let's take a peek into the extensive and wonderful effects it can have on our dogs.

When is Canine Massage Appropriate?

Unfortunately, some of our pets experience orthopedic injuries such as cruciate repairs and luxating patellas (aka floating kneecap). These often require lengthy physical therapy post-surgery. Those suffering from a luxating patella can benefit from canine massage through strengthening the muscles around the kneecap both pre and post-surgery. This creates a better "anchor" for the kneecap. Of course, a luxating patella does require veterinary care. Another thing to keep in mind post-surgery is that dogs often experience constipation due to medication but certain massage techniques can help fluid movement to address these issues and other related digestive issue. Overall, massage post-surgery helps speed up the recovery process just like an athlete uses sports massage to aid in the healing process.

Stress relief is another wonderful benefit. Just like we need a massage to reduce stress relief, dogs do too! Canine massage is a great tool to help ease anxious and stressed dogs and is a wonderful alternative to those resistant to medication therapy. Additionally, just the soothing touch of a calming massage can help strengthen the human-animal bond. Massage is also a great way to discover potential abnormalities through palpation technique.

We all love our senior pups so it's hard to see them experience decreased mobility and pain attributed to arthritis. Massage increases the oxygenation (blood flow) in the body helping improve flexibility and even offers benefits to the immune system. It also loosens tight muscle fascia (connective tissue) thus allowing better circulation to ease pain and discomfort. One last helpful benefit to canine massage is that it also can remove stored toxins in the body and improve overall health.

What to look for in a Canine Masseuse

Jenn Schaaff, the owner of Pampered Paws K9 Massage, knows firsthand the benefits of canine massage. She has extensive experience helping canines recover from sports injuries, accidents, arthritic pain and surgeries. She also works with veterinarians to create a custom treatment plan for each patient. This willingness to work with your veterinarian and the ability to prepare a customized treatment plan is a must for those looking for a canine masseuse. You will also want to find a massage therapist who will travel to your home to ensure the most comfortable experience for your pet.



Benefits of Regular Massage:

- Stimulates circulation
- Releases endorphins (the body's natural pain relievers)
- Reduces muscle spasms and creates a positive effect on the movement of the muscles...releasing tension and relaxing muscles
- Enhances muscle tone and increases range of motion
- Promotes healing by increasing the flow of nutrients to the muscles and assisting in carrying away excessive fluids and toxins
- Promotes longevity
- Reduces inflammation and swelling in the joints, alleviating pain
- Helps to maintain the whole body in better physical condition

Specifics: Where to Massage and the Associated Benefits

The legs:

Helps speed up the healing process from orthopedic injuries and may also reverse muscle atrophy related to inactivity or disuse.

The ears and ear flaps:

These have pressure points that energize the entire body.

The Back:

We all know the benefits of a great back massage. For your pet it can relieve stress and pain associated with stomach illness. It can also aid in vomiting by loosening the muscles often tensed around the stomach.

The Head:

Just like for humans, a great head massage can really help with relaxation. There are also pressure points near the eyes which are related to the stomach and bladder issues and can aid in relieving related symptoms.

The Paws:

Believe it or not, these are energy vortexes and massaging the paws can promote circulation and well-being.

The Hips:

Great for senior dogs experiencing hip dysplasia and arthritis through the release of healing endorphins.

When choosing a canine masseuse make sure you receive recommendations, check to see that the masseuse is certified and has the experience and knowledge required to treat your pet's ailment. For great tips and pictures visit Pampered Paws K9 Massage's Facebook page.

Source: <http://onpets.com/canine-massage-the-history>



Video Suggestions from Cheryl Meyers, CMT

Massaging Your Dog / Teacher's Pet with Victoria Stilwell
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kbO2krzr0g>

*This is a good video. As usual Victoria presents useful and good information.
Warning.... this video will make you sleepy and relaxed!*

WikiHOW

<https://www.wikihow.com/Message-a-Dog>

This is another good one. Simple straightforward instructions and sketches.

Videos Suggestions for Older Dogs from Kris Cole, CMT

Dog with Arthritis – Massage Techniques
<https://youtu.be/SHR0n2hjoWU>

Easy DIY Dog Arthritis Massage at Home - Marc Smith DVM
<https://youtu.be/f6ZK9EwOF10>