

The laying on of hands: Tellington TTouch

The May 7 general meeting featured guest speaker Barbara Janelle of Tellington TTouch, who discussed the value of touch therapy in influencing behaviour in dogs, as well as the positive impact the technique can have on dogs' health. She was kind enough to write a summary of her talk for the FORUM.

by **Barbara Janelle**

In the early 1970s, renowned horsewoman Linda Tellington Jones combined classical horse training procedures with ideas from Feldenkrais Body Awareness Work for humans for retraining the body through gentle, non-habitual movement. To this she added a new kind of touch work that addressed both cellular memory and the nervous system. The result was a revolutionary and remarkably effective procedure for training horses called the Tellington-Jones equine Awareness Method (TTEAM).

Linda and her TTEAM Practitioners found that performance, behaviour and a wide range of health problems in horses responded quickly to TTEAM Touch, Ground Exercises and Riding with Awareness work. By the mid-1980s, they were beginning to use Tellington TTouch with dogs, cats and many kinds of animals in zoos and wildlife rehabilitation centres, with remarkable results. A new relationship and understanding develops as humans and animals work together with trust and confidence.

Three topics were introduced during the talk to CAP PDT: the concept of working with, rather than imposing work on, the dog; the use of TTEAM Ear work to calm an anxious or excited dog, and to improve health; and Tellington TTouch to increase awareness and confidence in dogs.

Working with the dog

The key to working with any animal is to recognize and honour its needs. If a fearful animal is forced to do something, the only thing it learns is to be tense. If instead the trainer uses the voice, work with the ears and self-quiet to help the animal relax and breathe, a bridge to profound learning and trust is established. The dog's breathing, facial expression and body language are clear indications of its ability to take in information. Monitoring them and taking time to reassure

and connect with the animal throughout training leads to greater confidence and joy for both the animal and the human.

Ear work for relaxation and health

Each ear has close to 400 acupressure points. So when a human strokes a dog's ears, there is a tremendous impact on health and behaviour. A firm but gentle slip-slide movement from the base of the ear to the tip speaks to every major system in the animal's body. The points around the entire base of the ear form the Triple Heater Meridian, which affects digestion, respiration, blood circulation and reproduction. The point at the tip of the ear is for shock, and pressing this at the end of the full ear slip-slide can bring an injured or exhausted animal out of shock quickly and keep it out of shock until veterinary help can be reached.

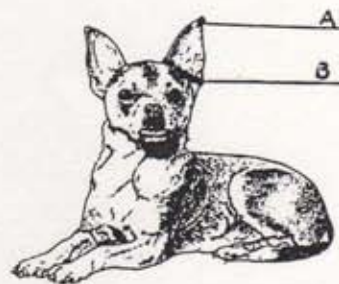
In addition, the work on the ears relaxes a dog very quickly. More and more trainers now begin their classes by having owners sit quietly and work their dogs' ears for five minutes. As a result, the animals (and owners) are relaxed, breathing, focused and ready to learn.

At Camp Gone to the Dogs in Putney, Vermont, where I have taught this work, many owners find that the ear work helps their dogs settle into camp very quickly. It also calms dogs who are terrified of thunder, and many people report that after working their dog's ears through a couple of thunderstorms, the animals are never terrorized by the noise again.

Increasing awareness and confidence

Fearful dogs easily hold their breath and go into instinctive fear behaviour such as aggression, flight or freeze. Often dogs who are afraid of people, other dogs, loud noises, strange situations, etc. do not have a full awareness of their own physical bodies. For example, if you touch the dog's tail or hindquarters, even when it is relaxed, the animal will hold its breath, move away from you, sit on its tail (you can't get to it then!) or give a warning growl.

My sense is that the touch has been felt either as a kind of shock or as a tickle.



A: Point for shock; B: Triple Heater Meridian for digestion, respiration, circulation and reproduction.

Through the Tellington TTouch, we integrate the body parts more fully with the brain, redefining the dog's body for it and bringing much more confidence to the animal. As well, the animal then is more comfortable with handling and treatment from the owner or veterinarian.

The basic Tellington TTouch is done by touching and moving the skin in small clockwise circles with the pads of the fingers. Breathing and relaxation help keep the hand relaxed, and "listening" for response from the dog -- breathing, skin relaxation, etc. is involved.

Tellington TTouch on the hindquarters, tail and mouth can lead quickly to significant behavioral changes. The upper lip is controlled by the part of the brain that controls the limbic system, a key to the emotions. Tiny circles on the upper and lower gums and on the lips increase the dog's adaptability and confidence.

Tellington TTouch is also very effective for movement problems, including hip dysplasia. Through the TTouch it is possible to activate millions of unused "back-up" nerve cells in the body, as well as to increase blood circulation and stimulate the body's own healing mechanisms.

Tellington TTouch offers many new tools to dog trainers and owners as it builds trust and confidence in the animals. The work is fun to do and enjoyable for both dogs and people.

(Thanks to Ann Colacci's dogs Mambo and Hunter for volunteering for demonstrations of various kinds of Tellington TTouches on the mouth, tail and hindquarters.)