



What is Osteopathy/Animal Normalization Therapy?

Osteopathy and Animal Normalization Therapy (ANT) are nonpharmaceutical, “hands-on” approaches aimed at strengthening the body’s own defense mechanisms. Derived from the Greek words “osteon” (tissue) and “pathos” (feeling), osteopathy is essentially “feeling the motion of the tissues.”

There is a direct relationship between the musculoskeletal system and the function of the rest of the body. This relationship is dependent on the circulatory and nervous systems and fascia. Fascia is everywhere in the body, surrounding blood vessels, nerves, organs and muscles. These three systems (blood, lymph, fascia) organize the body into a unified, continuous whole. Any inappropriate disturbance in this structure and/or fluid flow can trigger dysfunction in other parts of the body. For example, muscles function to move or to protect. If a muscle is contracted and in a spasm, the muscle is protecting something. As a result, there will be a three-dimensional vascular hemostasis that develops in the affected arteries, capillaries and veins. The fluid or pressure dynamics in that area will be altered, and tension in the surrounding tissues will build. The rhythms of the involved tissues will be altered as well. The body then starts to compensate for altered pressures and restricted fluid flow. Alterations of fluid may occur in the cerebrospinal, lymphatic, vascular and interstitial systems. These alterations of flow are noticed in musculoskeletal patterns, felt in heat and tension, and corrected by using Animal Normalization Therapy techniques.

Osteopathy may be divided into two techniques: direct, where the practitioner thrusts through the restrictive barrier (i.e., chiropractic manipulations), and indirect, where the practitioner sets up the tissues to “unwind” and to move through the restrictive barrier on their own (i.e., ANT).

Categories of indirect techniques include craniosacral, myofascial release, functional indirect, nerve release and vascular manipulation. These indirect techniques are well-known to physical and manual therapists but are not widely utilized in veterinary medicine. The emerging field of Animal Normalization Therapy has tremendous potential to help animals with a variety of back, neck and limb problems. Animal Normalization Therapy helps restore function more quickly, painlessly and permanently than using stretching and strengthening exercises alone.