**Holistic Options for Pets with Musculoskeletal Disorders**

  [Hip dysplasia](http://www.examiner.com/topic/hip-dysplasia), degenerative joint disorder and [arthritis](http://www.examiner.com/topic/arthritis) are the most common issues treated by acupuncture. Why?-Because it works well to control pain and improve range of motion affected by these conditions. Many pure-bred [dogs](http://www.examiner.com/dogs) are screened for hip dysplasia, but it is still a common problem. This is a condition where the socket of the hip joint is too shallow to properly keep the head of the rear leg stable. Over time, the laxity of the joint leads to accumulation of excess bone in an attempt to stabilize the joint. The cartilage, or the cushioning of the joint at the ends of each bone, becomes so worn down that the ends of the bones grind painfully against each other.
      Glucosamine, chondroitin, ester C, fish oils, anti-inflammatory herbs, and acupuncture points all help to reduce inflammation and help restore the cushion in the joint spaces. This helps reduce pain and improve mobility. Buyers beware, however, because there is no regulation as to the quality of products that are available over the counter if you pick out a random source of glucosamine or chondroitin for your pet. If it helps, wonderful! However, testing has shown that some commonly sold over-the counter products contain almost none of the advertised ingredient. If your pet is having musculoskeletal problems, it is worthwhile to have them evaluated by a veterinarian.
      Dysplasia can occur in other joints as well, such as the elbows. Acupuncture and herbs can be equally as helpful here as in the hips. Arthritis or osteoarthritis can occur in almost any joint, and is likewise highly amenable to pain relief through [holistic](http://www.examiner.com/topic/holistic) therapies. “Wobblers disease,” or cervical vertebral malformation, occurs in horses and Great Dane dogs where the bones in the neck pinch on the spinal cord. Although this is a structural problem, the symptoms of gait abnormalities can be greatly improved with acupuncture as well.
      It has been estimated that arthritis is under-diagnosed in cats. As cats get older and more sedentary, they can be experiencing arthritis and decreased joint mobility just like dogs. Cats are often better at hiding it, however. If you’ve noticed your cat becoming less playful over the years, gaining weight, or having new behavioral issues, they could be experiencing discomfort in their joints. Prescription medications are often difficult to get cats to eat, so acupuncture can be a more feasible solution to help them.
      Tendon and ligament injuries are also extremely common in dogs, cats and horses and are highly amenable to acupuncture and [herbal remedies](http://www.examiner.com/topic/herbal-remedies). Torn cruciate ligaments are a very painful injury that I treat often in my practice.  Ultrasounds have shown regrowth of tendons and ligaments in horses after a few months of acupuncture and herbal therapies.