**IBD**

Inflammatory bowel syndrome/disease (IBS/IBD) is a chronic gut issue resulting in vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation. In 1997, the National Institutes of Health put out a consensus statement that acupuncture was a valid and effective therapy for IBD in people. The same is true for animals.

Acupuncture, herbs, nutritional supplements, food therapy, reiki, and energy work are all contributors to helping ease IBD. Additionally, understanding the human-animal bond and evaluating stressors in the environment can help. Many treatment options exist that avoid antibiotics, steroids, and immunosuppressive drugs—the typical therapies for these gastrointestinal disorders. Natural therapies tend to calm down and heal the gut lining, making it less inflamed and reactive to food. In turn, this makes your pet feel better, have a healthier immune system, and be less likely to catch other infections or develop cancer as a result of being on immunosuppressive drugs, such as cyclosporine and prednisone.

The theory behind these types of drugs is that if the immune system is causing excess inflammation, then it needs to be suppressed. However, this is often at a cost to the overall health of the animal, especially when other healthier and safer alternatives exist.

Antibiotics, especially chronic use of them—obliterate natural beneficial gut flora. These “good bacteria”—or probiotics—are vital to intestinal and subsequent overall health. Probiotics help process food and feed cells lining the GI tract. If a gut is leaky, inflamed, or overrun with bad bacteria, the toxins are easily distributed throughout the body. But antibiotics are not selective, and they end up killing both the good and the bad.

Seventy percent of the immune system is estimated to be housed in the gut, so it makes sense for Hippocrates to have said, “Let food be thy medicine.” If the gut is not working properly, then all systems in the body will suffer.

Antibiotics and steroids tend to lose efficacy over time. Steroids can create a predisposition to developing insulin resistance or diabetes. Chronic antibiotics create resistant bacterial strains and contribute to imbalances in gut flora, and therefore the immune system.

Simple solutions such as soluble fiber, like pumpkin and acacia, and other culinary herbs like fennel and peppermint can help calm IBD symptoms. Diet restrictions often need to be applied, and parasites and stress should be evaluated. If the patient is stressed, increased exercise and playtime can help in addition to owner meditation and lifestyle changes.