

Herd Health Using Natural Therapies

Massage & Other Techniques

By Candace Wingo L.M.T., C.A.T. (Licensed Massage Therapist, Certified Animal Therapist)

Many natural therapies can be part of the herd management program for alpacas and llamas. At our ranch, we use natural therapies and natural products when needed, on herd health day and for special cases. Our herd of 70+ alpacas are happy and healthy but when we have a problem we work with our veterinarians for their diagnosis, knowledge & care. We only use natural therapies that will compliment the veterinarian's recommendations.

Several alpacas have been brought to our ranch for rehab after being checked out by their veterinarian. We then work as their agent in the rehab process working closely with the veterinarians in any natural therapies that we do.

We prefer that rehab alpacas or llamas stay with their own herd, which is less stressful for them. Many phone consultations have helped owners add some natural therapies to compliment the veterinarian's work. And many veterinarians have called & requested a certain therapy or have suggested the animal's owner call for a consultation. The goal is to assist the animal in the healing process working with the veterinarian.

Some of the natural therapies & natural products that we use & recommend are:

- Massage Therapy
- Auricular Therapy
- Herbs
- Essences
- Natural antibiotics
- Homeopathic remedies - from a Homeopathic DVM.
- Essential Oils
- Magnet Therapy
- Nutritional Products using herbs from the regions of Peru (Animal Herbal Formula)
- Insect Spray – natural spray that kills lice, ticks, mange and more.

We don't depend on one natural product or therapy but select according to what the animal needs after consulting with the veterinarian. Sometimes several therapies or natural products work together to help the animal.

This article is about massage and some other techniques I use on alpacas and other animals.

Before starting anything new with an animal we first need to tell the animal what we are getting ready to do. I believe what we speak and think becomes a picture in our mind, which the animal reads. They read our thoughts by way of pictures. So....., be careful what pictures you send. For example, when getting ready to give an injection or trim toenails, don't picture that it's going to hurt

or be hard to do or that it's going to be a struggle with them. Picture the process relaxed, calming and easy for the animal and you.

All rehab animals are always told what we are getting ready to do to help them get healthy. Whether we're giving an oral mixture, doing a massage technique or just holding them for the veterinarian to check something, we tell them what is getting ready to happen and we picture them healthy & happy. We also ask the owners to think positive and healthy thoughts every time they think about their animal. This is a tremendous help to the animal and it helps them not give up. This is for all animals – dogs, cats, horses, alpacas, goats, llamas, etc.

Here's a great technique I use to help BALANCE the alpaca or any other animal. (Don't forget to send the picture of what you are going to do.) Tell them, speaking out loud or just thinking to yourself, "I'm going to help you get balanced and be calm". Be sure you are breathing & not holding your breath.

There is a balance point area on top of the shoulder blades. Hold your hand up under the jaw of your alpaca and put the other hand across the top of the shoulder blades. Stand with your feet slightly apart so you will be stable and balanced. This area is a point of balance. Always connect by placing your other hand up under the jaw or somewhere else on the body. Even if someone is holding the animal for you, connect with both hands with one hand on the balance point area. Hold your hand on the balance point area several seconds or longer depending on what you need to do with the animal. You will notice how this will help them stand still and be calm. Some alpacas respond to tapping the balance point with the tips of your fingers and others do best with just holding your hand flat across the shoulder blades.

We use this balance point when the veterinarian does ultra-sounds on females, at herd health when we trim toenails or teeth, when looking in the ears with an otoscope or any time we need them to be calm and still. You will find this balance point technique works really well.

This is also a great technique when working with a new cria and helping them become more manageable & balanced early in life. Be sure & picture what you're going to do and breathe, don't hold your breath. Once you have the cria standing in front of you, use this technique until they stand calm & still. Don't let them leave until they hold still. It's very easy to hold them gently one hand under the jaw and the other on the point of balance. The rule is – they must stand still & calm, then you can release slowly and they can easily & calmly walk away. They can't leave struggling to get away which would reinforce the fear and response to run. This would also create a bad habit of never being calm around you and always running from you. Using this balance technique will help them be more balanced and manageable & more fun to be around.

MASSAGE TECHNIQUES come in handy & offer a drug-free, non-invasive approach based on the body's natural ability to heal itself. Massage, however, is not a substitute for veterinarian advice, diagnosis or treatment.

With massage techniques, the general rule is – massage on the basis of feedback. That means "feel-see" how your animal reacts. They may not like it at first but keep trying a little each time you

work with them. You will find they will lean into your touch letting you know what feels good and what might be tender.

Use small circular movements with a light soft touch. Starting at the head, softly massage the back of the head between the ears and at the base of the skull. (This part of the head is another area that helps balance the animal & helps calm them.) Just like on us, this area becomes very tight when under stress. Massage this area and then work your way down the neck and to the shoulder blades using a light soft touch. This helps balance the animal and is a great technique to do before going into the show ring. Be sure you don't hold your breath while working on your animal.

Breathe a slow relaxed breath they can hear. This will help them relax and start breathing the same way. At several shows, I've done this massage work for some real unmanageable alpacas. After a quick session they walked calmly into the show ring. One owner had a beautiful male alpaca that wouldn't hold still or walk relaxed in the show ring. He had tried at several shows and the judge never could even look at his fiber. After our session, this male walked out so relaxed, was calm and stood perfect for the judge. He won his first blue ribbon! The owners were very excited!

So what are the benefits of massage for yourself and your animals?

- Increases relaxation of the nervous system.
- Decreases anxiety and stress.
- Creates balance of the body.
- Increases circulation, allowing the body to pump more oxygen & nutrients into tissues and vital organs.
- Stimulates the flow of lymph, the body's natural defense system, against toxins.
- Increased circulation of blood & lymph systems improves the condition of the body's largest organ – the skin.
- Reduces spasms and cramping.
- Relaxes and softens injured & overused muscles.
- Unwinds stress-tightened muscles.
- Increases joint flexibility.
- Releases endorphins – the body's natural painkiller.
- Reduces edema and post-surgery adhesions and can reduce scar tissue after healing has occurred.
- Promotes healing of muscles and other tissues.
- Improves range-of-motion and decreases discomfort in areas of the body.
- Provides exercise and stretching for atrophied muscles and reduces shortening of the muscles for those with restricted range of motion.
- Improves recovery from injury.
- Reduces fatigue and can increase more energy to handle stressful situations.
- Promotes a better mental, emotional and spiritual balance.
- Can provide true relaxation and peace.
- Increases the communication & understanding between animal & human, creating a closer bond.
- Increases the mental & emotional 'focus' and 'centeredness' of the animal.

Massage therapy should always be supportive of and does not replace the function of a veterinarian. There are some instances when massage is not appropriate and occasions when massage should only be administered through doctor approval. Precautions are conditions or situations when some massage is OK, but you may need to adjust how and where it's applied or which techniques is best to use.

In addition to consulting with your veterinarian, you will also find it helpful to consult with a licensed massage therapist about how to adjust the session according to the veterinarian's advice.

Times when you DO NOT massage your animal:

- Shock
- A fever or systemic infection.
- Broken bone area.
- Congestive heart condition.
- Diabetic

These are times that you would adjust what techniques you use and how and where you apply them after consulting with your veterinarian. And depending on the severity and specific nature, some contraindications for massage are:

- Some skin conditions – rash, lesions, wounds, sensitive skin, etc.
- Arthritis and dysplasia.
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Any injury or recent surgery, especially cardiac related surgery.
- Local infections.
- Some medications.
- Many health conditions including circulatory, metabolic, neurological and many more.

Always consult your veterinarian before doing massage techniques if your animal is ill or on medication.

I hope this information on massage and other techniques will help you with your alpacas & other animals. We have found, over the years, that these natural therapies work for us in our herd management program and for rehab clients too. These therapies can be a great compliment to the veterinarian's care.

The goal in Holistic Animal Care is to help the animal heal itself, working to balance the mind, body and spirit. Healing is a team effort that involves God, the animal, the veterinarian and the people that love them. If I can help in that team effort, then I've provided a gift from my heart.

Candace Wingo LMT, CAT
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Bio –

Candace and her husband, Larry, have owned alpacas since 1998 and manage a herd of approximately 90 alpacas at their Mountain Dream Alpacas ranch in Navasota, Texas. Her BA in Environmental Design and a career as a corporate Interior Designer, Project Manager and free-lance Landscape Designer has come in handy in creating well planned out pastures, barns, B&B cottage & ranch store. But her real passion is holistic health care for animals and creating healing, holistic environments. And now that's what she does, living her passion daily! Her friends are always asking for advice and sometimes affectionately call her "Candace Wingo, Medicine Woman."

In 1995 Candace became a C.A.T. (Certified Animal Therapist) after a year and a half of classes every week. In 2001 she became a L.M.T. (Licensed Massage Therapist) and works on human and animal clients. Working with veterinarians and their diagnosis, she can compliment their care using many different natural therapies depending on what the animal needs. She uses Herbs, Essences, Magnet Therapy, Massage Therapy, Auricular Therapy, Essential Oils, Homeopathic remedies and Nutritionals to help the animals. Over the years, she has worked on lots of critters including dogs, cats, alpacas, llamas, horses, goats, ponies, swans and even iguanas. Many alpacas have been brought to their ranch for rehab, after being referred & checked by a veterinarian, and many have been helped with phone consultations. Candace doesn't diagnose and works closely with the animal owner's veterinarian as their agent.

Candace & Larry recently completed a DVD titled "Healthy Herd Management for Alpacas" plus "Putting Together A Natural Barn Kit". The balance point in the article is shown on the DVD along with several other massage techniques.

Candace, along with another holistic practitioner presented two classes at the 2009 AOBA National/World Conference in Ohio titled "Herd Health Using Natural Therapies". They were then contacted to present at several more alpaca conferences. Last Oct. 2009 they presented two classes at VAOBA Alpaca Expo in Virginia. Several others are lined up for 2010.

All the attendees and many others have been asking for a catalog of the products that they use & recommend. So ---- Alpacas ALL Naturale' was formed to carry a line of natural health care products for alpacas and for other animals too! See the website: www.alpacasALLnaturale.com

Look for more articles on natural therapies and natural products for alpacas and other animals.

For a consultation with Candace or to schedule Natural Therapy Workshops or Classes at your ranch or conference contact: Candace at Candace@MountainDreamAlpacas.com or Candace@Holistic-Critters.com