



Alternative Therapies for Small Animals

Interview with Dr. Kocen, DVM, CVA
Veterinary Holistic Center

This is a (slightly revised) transcript of the interview by Maribeth Decker, Animal Communicator, Sacred Grove, of Dr. Jordan Kocen about alternative veterinary services and his clinic, the Veterinary Holistic Center. Watch the interview at <https://youtu.be/JFoo2fBQQwE>.

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What is the Veterinary Holistic Center?

The Veterinary Holistic Center is in North Springfield (Virginia). We're a practice that is limited to, we'll call it, holistic services, holistic medicine.

We don't provide any conventional medical therapies but focus on non-conventional medicines, alternative therapies as they're called, or holistic medicines; predominately, acupuncture therapy, Chinese herbal medicine, homeopathy. We have two veterinary chiropractors who have joined us. We have a massage therapist and rehab specialists. And of course, we have an animal communicator, yourself, who has joined us, as well, and to continue to look for other services to add that can provide care for animals that maybe we can't do from a conventional medicine side.

When to consider alternative therapies

People who are already taking their small animals (dogs, cats, rabbits) to their regular vet - when do they think about your services? When might people say, I wonder if I should consider holistic alternative therapies?

- The majority are people who have been to their regular veterinarian for care, and the therapies either have maybe worked initially but no longer work.
- We have certainly some cases they just don't respond to conventional medicine, because certain conditions are not as responsive to conventional medicine.
- We have folks which are using alternative therapies or holistic medicines in their own lives and they're looking to see if this available for animals - If the results will be as good as Western medicine, of course.
- We have a lot of cases where we integrate therapies, just as we do in Western medicine. You may have surgery and then follow up with medical care. We may have patients that are on medicines. And again, they're doing okay, but they can be better, so we find therapies we can add in to have an integrated medicine approach.

Interestingly, people come with the next pet much sooner.

Once they've seen the kind of benefits that alternative therapies can offer for the general health of the pet, they will often certainly see their regular vet for an initial evaluation or early evaluations. But if they see the therapy's not working, rather than just hoping it will work, they call us sooner with the second pet to say, hey, can you guys intervene? Should you intervene?

Acupuncture

80% or more of the patients that we use acupuncture with will show improvements. And these are discernible improvements. The clients notice, the spouse notices, the neighbors notice.



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People find us because their friends have told them about the care. I've even had folks tell me that they were walking their dog and somebody said, "Hey, my dog used to walk that way. "You need to go to the Holistic Center to get some acupuncture."

A Client Story: Older beagle, a bit overweight, weak hind end, kind of stiff, not playing

As an example, we were seeing an older beagle, a little bit overweight. Not dramatically, but a little bit overweight. Weak in the hind end, kind of stiff, slow getting up, certainly wasn't running around and playing any, doing anything like this, slipping on the floor sometime.

The owner's starting to wonder is it time, for their sake, that maybe they're so uncomfortable that it might be time to make a decision (to let them pass on). They had been on some medications with minimal improvements.

The examines confirmed weakness in the hind end. This is not uncommon with dogs as they get older. There's less nerve flow to the back legs, maybe some arthritis, some muscle loss, so it manifests as hind end weakness.

The body's always trying to get better and compensate, so they tend to shift their weight forward and their backs get tight. Just like a person would have a tension in their back, well, that makes it harder to get around. That causes back end weakness, which makes the back even tighter.

The examination showed a good range of motion with the legs, his knees were not the greatest, his hips weren't the greatest, but they were good. It wasn't enough going on there to account for his symptoms, but he had a lot of back tension.

These are the kind of cases that are very responsive to acupuncture, mainly because acupuncture's main result and early result is muscle relaxation. So we started with acupuncture.

We usually start weekly for the first few visits, maybe a seven to 10-day interval to start off with. First visit, and second visit, no changes. At the third visit and she says, "I think he's moving a little bit smoother. He's getting up and down a little bit more often." I definitely felt on examine that his back was not as tight. He had a little more fluidity, a little more movement there.

By the next visit, she said, "He's trying to go up the stairs. He's trying to get on the couch. He's kind of moving a little more outside."

Next visit, he had been to the pet sitter where he stays, and she's got several hounds herself. And the report back was he's kind of running with the other guys outside or certainly trying to.

When I saw him last week, this might've been his sixth visit, maybe seventh, she said, "He's running around the backyard."

So that's just amazing from three months ago, when she was thinking quality of life was such a big issue, to have such a turnaround with such a non-invasive therapy. Because the acupuncture is not in the



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examine room, no sedation is necessary. Once the acupuncture needle's placed, most just lay down and relax. Then the needles come out after 20 minutes and they go home.

So it's non-invasive in that sense. No chemicals need be used, so no metabolic problems, no need to worry about organ changes down the road. So really, he's a great example.

And fortunately, not uncommon.

Nobody wants to make the decision before they have to. Nobody wants to let their pet go. That saves the animal and the person a tough decision that didn't need to be made. And so, how good is that?

Arthritis, Hip Dysplasia, Torn ACL

Even those who have arthritis... And we do see some of the bigger dogs, labs, golden retrievers, german shepherds, they may have some arthritis in their hips from hip dysplasia or just arthritis. Dogs that have had a torn ACL with or without surgery will have arthritis in their knees.

Even with those physical changes, we find many of them are much more fluid, much more comfortable with acupuncture therapy. Because again, it's helping to improve what it can improve. It helps the body compensate for some of those chronic problems.

And for those who are on medication, maybe anti-inflammatory medicines or pain meds, since there's nothing on the acupuncture needles, it's fully compatible.

Weaning down medication doses

Indeed as they improve, people find they can wean down their doses. They may not be able to wean off, but they can wean down, which right there makes it safer in the long run, as well.

Mobility Issues

But my experience has been that for the mobility situations, acupuncture works really well.

Herbal Medicine

We're veterinarians, so we know the strengths of drug therapy, if you will, or if a consult with a specialist might be in order, if it hasn't been done.

Metabolic Diseases: Liver and Kidney Changes

Where the herbal medicines can be very helpful have been a collection of conditions I would call metabolic diseases such as liver and kidney changes either through exposure to toxins; age-related diseases. Particularly as dogs and cats age, kidney disease is not an uncommon thing.

Chronic Problems: Skin, Digestion, Respiration

The key there is chronicity. These are all longer-term inflammatory processes, which anti-inflammatory medicines may or may not control. And if they do, they have their side effects. And if you try to get off



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the drugs, the problems come back because truly they never went away. You were controlling the inflammation.

Herbal medicines, particularly Chinese herbal, which is my training, but herbal medicines in general, work to stimulate the body's immune system to try to decrease that inflammation. So in that way, it's safer for the body because it doesn't hurt the liver or hurt the organs, because the body doesn't see the medicines as a toxin as it would a pharmaceutical.

But also by training or stimulating the body system to work, it gives a much broader effect. It's fixing things in there that we really don't even know about, but the body knows. It just didn't have the capacity to do so, or it wasn't doing the job.

Sometimes I tell people the herbs just kick everything into gear and get the body doing what it can do -- so, indeed, the disease was the body wasn't fixing itself for whatever reason. That's where we find it helpful.

Cats don't like the taste of herbal medicines (Maribeth's side note - Are we surprised??)

Herbal medicines can be problematic in cats, because they don't taste so good. And cats don't like the idea, but some are amenable. So we might use herbal therapies. So we use liquids when we can. Often, they just need a few drops if they're a smaller-sized cat. Even some of the powders can be mixed in.

Dogs are easier

With dogs, we tend to use the tablets and maybe some of the powder concentrates or capsules, because they can be put in the food. And most dogs are not quite as discriminating.

Long-term use is OK

Herbs can be used for longer-term. In older animals, older people, your immune system's getting a little bit weaker, so there are immune tonics, as they call them, which generally enhance immune function without saying go fix this, go fix that, just in general to boost. You've got some of these 14 and 15-year-old dogs.

Everything's getting slow, but it doesn't mean that there isn't some capacity in there that you can't tap into to just increase the efficiency of how the body's doing. So the overall function is they're more alert, they're more connected.

Sure they sleep a lot, but they're old. But when they're awake, they're more connected, they can do stuff. They still walk slow. They're old. It's okay. They say "I'm going to get there. It's okay." They're not in a hurry, anymore.

Chinese versus Western Herbs

Natural herbs can be rather beneficial. And as I said, my training is Chinese herbal. I don't use a lot of Western herbs, only because I haven't had training in that area. But a good Western herbalist can do just as good, I suppose, as Chinese herbals.



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Patient Story: Dog really wild on the leash and hyper alert at home

Well, you had one dog that really was behavioral issues, if you will. He was just a little wild on the leash when they took him for walks. He was a bigger hound and fine with people. When he saw other dogs, I don't know if it was really aggression, but it could be taken that way. But it was just hyper excitability, if you will, and a little more hyper vigilant at home, too, looking out the window, people passing by, just a little more vocal than they needed to be. And just you figure, wow, that's all wasted energy. Why do that? You don't need to do that.

This was a case where we introduced different herbs over time. We made modifications and then he ended up being on three different formulas, because no one formula really helped. But once we had the right combo... He did really well for a really long time.

He was in recently. As he aged, he started showing some hind end weakness, so we started some acupuncture with him. And then the question, of course, that came up was, "Hey, do you think we still need to keep the same herbs going?"

And I said he's older. He probably doesn't care as much. Maybe his hearing is down a little bit, his vision is down, age-related changes, so we're going to start weaning him down to, again, see if we can get him off of those over time.

Treatable but not curable

Many of the cases we see are not curable. They're definitely treatable. But either because by the time we see them, it's been going on too long or the nature of the problem, it can't be cured. To get the best benefits, they probably can't get off their herbs.

The clients can always stop if they want. They'll still be better than they were before we started. But in time, those progression continues. So we find continuing at some level of therapy gives the best benefits for most of our patients.

Intervening earlier – acupuncture and herbals

Hypothetically, if we could intervene sooner, we could actually nip some of these things in the bud. Maybe some of these mobility guys, where they have this progressive hind end weakness, if we started doing acupuncture when they were younger and they were just starting to slow down, and then just do a tune-up three or four times a year, single treatment, you maintain them. Which is how it's done in China for people, especially when you start when you're really young.

But again, if you don't start until you're older, there's a limit as to how much better you can get and what that interval could be between visits.

That applies to the herbals, as well, that maybe if we knew enough to intervene sooner. And again, people come with the second pet sooner. So we are seeing quicker results, able to get off the herbs, maybe, again, depending on the nature of the problem.



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Still, long-term use of herbal medicines is so safe compared to pharmaceuticals, that there just haven't been any problems.

Vaccinosis (an adverse reaction to vaccines)

Certainly in the holistic world, my teachers have been covering this topic for a very long time and now it's coming around to reviewing it from the conventional perspective, too.

And my experience and my belief is it's not so much that vaccines are bad. The problem that comes about is over vaccinating. So my usual joke to clients is I got my puppy shots. I don't have to keep getting boosted. *(Maribeth side comment: People don't have to go back to update mumps/measles/rubella vaccine shots, right?)*

So with clients and with puppies, the manufacturers have made some really good vaccines. When you give them to the puppy, they are truly immunized. And for most viral diseases, which in the dog world would be distemper and parvo and rabies; and in the cat world, feline distemper and rabies. They really have long-term immunity from their juvenile vaccinations.

The problem seems to come about when they come back a year later for a quote unquote booster. If they're immunized or since they're immunized, now the immune system has to fight the vaccine. And right there, a vaccine is an infection. So now you're creating inflammation. The body has to get rid of those inflammatory compounds, and you're tying up immune capacity.

And as you come back a year later and a year later, I don't think it ever catches up. So by year three, year four, year five, you've got a non-stop infection going, man-made.

And apparently for no real reason, in that they had immunity from the puppy shots or the kitten shots.

This wasn't understood in the past. So it's not that veterinarians are bad people. They were working from the information they had at the time.

Titer tests as an alternative

But the current and new information, new tests, particularly a test called the titer test. That measures the body's immune status to that disease. So if one draws a blood sample on a dog to check the parvo and distemper titer and it's positive, you don't need a booster. It means if you're exposed to this disease in real life, you can fight it off.

But again, if you give them vaccine, the body can't ignore it. It needs to use some of its immune capacity to fight the vaccine, which means it's not in the storage pool to fight allergens, to fight other infections, to keep the normal metabolic processes going.

So this is an insidious problem. It's not a reaction to a vaccine within a week of giving it or a day later or even a month later. It's the cumulative effects of over-vaccination.



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More often, this is being recognized at the veterinary schools, and they're starting to appreciate this now that we have testing to check the status. And if it worked, you don't need a booster. Many animals are either immune for life or they're immune until eight years, 10 years, 12-years-old, and that's a good thing.

Maribeth: So hopefully the licensing folks will catch up with this, too.

State requirements

The good thing is the only requirement in most states is rabies vaccine. Distemper and parvo and these other vaccines are not required by anybody. A clinic may strongly suggest it. A bordering kennel may require it.

But I'll tell folks have a titer done. If your dog's blood test shows that they have immunity, you know your dog has immunity; not just that he got a shot, but he actually has immunity, it worked.

And then you can ask them, "Hey, is that dog in the kennel next to mine really immunized or is he just vaccinated?"

Vaccinated versus Immunized

Because all vaccinating means that he got a shot. Immunized means that it worked. And if it didn't work, what's wrong with your immune system?

Now, the vaccines are, again, highly effective; and in part, long-term immunity, so no need to weaken the system if you don't have to, obviously.

And so, overvaccination is related to disease leading to quote unquote vaccinosis, which manifests as chronic inflammatory problems, skin problems, respiratory problems, urinary problems. A lot of this is exacerbated by over-vaccination that's chronic vaccination.

Chiropractic

Maribeth: Chiropractic and acupuncture are totally different. And yet, they seem to work on similar issues. Can you talk about that or how chiropractic might be useful?

A lot of the therapies that we have provided by different people here do overlap in their ability to get positive results. Each one is unique. Each one has certain strengths and maybe some weaknesses.

Again, my training is acupuncture, so I would emphasize that one more just from experience. But after watching patients that have seen the chiropractors and the kind of patients that they see

As I said acupuncture, for general mobility problems, is certainly very helpful, particularly age-related, older dogs getting slower over time. I think nothing beats the acupuncture.



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Agility dogs, very active dogs, hikers

Where chiropractic really shines is for agility dogs, middle age and younger dogs that are really just very active, maybe people doing a lot of hiking because the people themselves are active and doing a lot of stuff. Even going to the dog park a lot, a lot of jumping, turning, twisting. They're relatively healthy.

But if you think about it, they're just overdoing, so things are slightly out of alignment. There is definitely some tension along the vertebrae, in the joints.

The chiropractors are very well trained to pick up that tension, do some slight adjustments as necessary to take attention off the muscles and the nerves, which then improve function.

Our two veterinary chiropractors are also certified in acupuncture, so they combine the therapies often, and they decide what that emphasis might be, depending on the patient. Because, the dogs are quite healthy prior to the visit, [they have] one or two visits, and they're done.

Now, agility dogs and agility people tend to practice five days a week and then go to trial two days a week on the weekend. Well, no athlete can work seven days a week. So in a way, they're maybe overdoing it with the dog. Those guys would need more support and more adjustment just because of the work they're doing. But as they retire, as they do less, then less work needs to be done.

Massage therapy

Massage therapy is really helpful for a lot of older animals, even middle age. The real advantage in my mind, coming from massage therapy, is what the massage therapist can show the owner.

We all know how to pet our dogs. Think of massage as focused petting. If she tells you where to push, where to pet, she's the specialist, she's the expert, she has the touch. But then on your dog, she says feel this. This is how you do it, this is where you stretch, this is where you push.

And then you go home and do your homework. And if you do, maybe you don't have to come in as often. You can re-up as necessary.

Rehab specialists

If they're no longer responding well, you come in because maybe now something has shifted. Then you might see our rehab specialists, which is called physical therapy in humans, but we have to call it rehab in animals.

Post-operative

It can be used post-operatively, of course, to get back to function, but a lot of middle-aged and older dogs benefit there. So I think of rehab as focused exercises. So they will do things to strengthen the core muscles, as they talk about in people. Certain exercises are good for stretching. So just simple examples would be you have your dog do sit stands. That's like a person doing squats. They would have you go three steps up and have the dogs back feet on the floor and make him stretch up the steps to get a



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treat. Well, that's a good back stretch. If you're on a walk, when you go to the park, they have those bollards that stop the cars going down the trail. You can have your dog walk between those, weave through those like a weave pole. So that also gets them limber and gets them doing well. These are things you can do.

Again, they give you exercise, they give you homework to do, see how healthy their dog is. These are mostly supportive exercises you can do, and you don't need to keep coming back in.

The older they are, there's more physical pathology. There're things in there that cannot get better to the best of our knowledge, but it doesn't mean that there can't be improvement. So they can work out an exercise regimen that you can often work into your regular day.

Sometimes with these older guys, you're simply sitting on the floor with your legs extended and making the dog step over your legs back and forth. That's stimulating them neurologically. So when their foot hits your leg, they're like, oh, I have to pick that up higher. And it trains them, re-trains them to learn how to walk properly, how to walk better, and then that helps even when they're not stepping over your legs.

So there are things you can do. It's not like, oh, we have to take yet another half-hour out of my day somehow to do my dog's exercises. There's some of that, but a lot of this is stuff you're doing. You're watching TV, anyway, so you may as well do the massage, you may as well do some simple exercises while you're there.

Maribeth: I was trained in human massage, and my dogs are benefiting. My cats could care less, but the dogs are loving it. Once you figure out how to incorporate it into your daily routine, it's a good way of bonding, too. Learning that is fantastic.

Underwater treadmill

Conditioning, strengthening

And this is for dogs with mobility problems in particular, with the rehab specialist directing that part of the practice. And the idea is that, two-fold, if you have a dog that you just want to do more conditioning, strengthening, you can walk them. But [in real life] you've got to walk a long time, find hills, and boost their strength. Well, water therapy like with our underwater treadmill, is setup for that.

Imagine a plexiglass chamber, eight-feet long and three-feet wide and we have a dog step into there. We close the door, we turn on the water, which fills up from the bottom, and then you turn on the treadmill. Now the dog is walking, but they're pushing against the water. Think about a person in a pool - walking in the pool is a lot harder than just walking in air.



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Overweight or older dogs

Some dogs can't walk that far, because they're overweight. Maybe they're older and they're a little bit weaker, so they can't walk that far. Of course, they're now getting overweight or gaining weight, losing muscle tone.

We can adjust the height of the water to provide a little bit of buoyancy so it's taking off some of their weight, and then turn on the floor. So now they still have to walk, but they don't have to do all the work.

It's not swimming. Swimming is a good exercise, too, cardiovascular. But if you watch dogs swim, they're paddling with the front, and they can cheat with the back legs, if they want. They can just drag them or kick every once in a while.

Whereas when they're walking, they have to walk because the floor is moving. And we can adjust the speed, we can adjust the height, we could have them face either way because it goes forwards and backwards.

When the session is finished, the water is pulled back out into our storage tank, through the filters, and then the dogs are let out, dried off, and that's how the process goes.

The water is monitored for pH and chlorine levels and things of this sort filtered, warmed, up in the 80s, and that seems just about right for most dogs. They feel comfortable with it. We've had quite a few that are starting with that and are really showing some promise.

Patient Story: Search and Rescue Dog Recovers

One did well with rehab therapy - it was just that extra little bit that the treadmill was able to bring that gave him that extra 5%. He's a Search and Rescue dog, so he's almost back to where he was before. It just shows treadmill alone can be beneficial.

Knee Surgery

When they've had these knee surgeries, the first thing the surgeon's going to say is you've got to get some rehab. Some of it is stretching and walking, but think about that, if you can get them into the water. Initially with a little more water so they are not as heavy, if you will, because of the buoyancy of the water. And yet, they're pushing against the water, so you still get the resistance work, too.

As they improve, you lower the water level, maybe 3/4 of the way up the thigh equivalent. Now they're just working against the water. That's going to really bring that strength back again, keep the back limber and just it's a bit of a cardiovascular workout, as well.

Typically a session would be walking for a few minutes, resting a few minutes, walking a few minutes, resting, building up to the level that they can handle.



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Animal Communication & Energy Healing (from Maribeth)

Animal communication provides a telepathic connection to an animal to clarify what emotional or physical issues might be getting in the way of better health. Emotional issues can be addressed in the session.

Through a medical intuition body scan, more information is received about how the animal is feeling physically and where weaknesses are found in the body – this provides the veterinarian with additional, useful information or confirms what the vet already know. Pain levels can be assessed, so they can be addressed by the vet.

Finally, people can find out from their animal if they are ready to pass on and if so, have an intimate conversation with the pet before they pass. They may discover that their pet has some final wishes.

Story: End of life decision

This dog had numerous physical issues and had lost some clarity in his thinking. He had been with his person for most of her adult life and so it was an extremely difficult decision to let him go. In connecting with him, I sensed he was ready to go – after he had his party.

When I shared that with his person and her boyfriend, they remembered that they always had a huge birthday party for this dog. Parents, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, cousins -- and their dogs -- were invited! So they planned to have a smaller, earlier birthday celebration because his birthday was 3 months away. This information assisted both the dog and his person in the transition.

Animal-Specific Information

Bunnies

We don't do any diagnostic medicine here. We do see some bunnies for mobility problems. Generally, their regular vet has helped them determine that's what's going on. Usually radiographs have been done. Even one of our clinics in our area can even do CAT scans for bunnies and exotics, which is amazing. Many times they're on medications as anti-inflammatories.

Acupuncture

But still, they have some back tension, too. And most of that's in the back end, because they're bunnies. They're relying on those back legs. They don't walk so well. They need to hop. When they walk, it really puts a strain on their back. So we've found also for those that are amenable to it, if you will, acupuncture in those cases have been very helpful.

Herbal Medicine

I have a lead on a vet in the Midwest who uses herbal medicines with bunnies, so I need to reach out to her to see is this appropriate with some of these cases. Maybe we can help an even broader array of that species, of that type of animal, to try to improve their health. But on the mobility, again, the vast majority improve.



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Cats and acupuncture

People will often ask, Can you do acupuncture in cats? And the answer is some. It depends on the cat. They're cats, after all. You do it only if they allow it. But again, minimal restraint, gentle handling, very small needles.

I do work with a fair amount of cats, and they've done well. Again, mobility problems predominately, back tension.

Acupuncture for Kidney disease

As cats age, the most common thing we see is kidney disease. Interestingly, acupuncture can be very helpful for kidney disease in older cats. Number one, some of them are getting some back tension, too.

I think part of the kidney disease syndrome is that the nerves to the kidney from the spinal cord are being pinched because of the back tension. Because our nerves just don't go to our muscles. They go to our organs. The organs are sending messages back to the spinal cord for integration, and that's how the system talks to itself is mainly through the nervous system.

So relaxing the back muscles, particularly in the areas where the nerves come off the spinal cord, which is right over the kidney, we not only improve back end strength and comfort for some of these guys, but we have seen improved kidney function.

They still have age-related kidney changes, but we're getting improved function and then lower rate of decline. We are all on the downhill slide in the big picture, but we can slow down that rate of change.

And doesn't everybody want that?

Veterinary Holistic Center

Our facility

Our center is a rather large-sized facility. The clinic is in the front.

1600 square foot space available

There's a 1,600 square-foot space in the back that our dog trainers us, but our therapists also use that, as well. It's got a rubber floor.

If an animal comes in and we're trying to figure out which leg is lame. You can't always tell. Is it this side or that side? Is it all four legs? What's happening there? And maybe helping to monitor improvement, too, because that rubber floor gives them traction, and yet it absorbs some of the shock. We can see how their moving.

Seminars

We've had a few seminars here. And speaking about the bunnies, we've done a fundraiser for the [House Rabbit Society](#). They've done Bunny Yoga here twice. They have another event coming up in about a month or two, where they'll use our space. They have some yoga teachers that come in, and then we



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close the gate and we release the bunnies. And they're hopping around while people are getting a yoga session. It's a lot of fun and raises a lot of money for the House Rabbit Society.

Adding Holistic Veterinary Services

We're looking to add more services. The only restriction is no conventional medicine. There are many wonderful conventional veterinarians in Northern Virginia, so we don't need to step on their toes. And by not providing those services, they see us as an extension of their practice, so they'll be more willing and have been much more willing to refer patients, to be supportive of patients when they hear that they've been here. Or if the client goes to the veterinarian and says, "Hey, what do you think about acupuncture?" Or, "What do you think about herbal medicine?" They may say, well, we don't offer that, but I've heard it can be helpful. Or we've seen patients that have improved and this is the place to go, because we know they're doing good work.

Other therapies I'd love to see added or expanded in our clinic:

- Tellington Touch
- Cranial-Sacral
- Veterinary Chiropractors (our chiro's are not here full-time)
- Massage therapy

Referrals

When there are other vets closer to a patient's home that offer a helpful alternate therapy, we'll refer the patient to those vets. We're not turning patients away. We want patients to continue with these therapies, so they see the benefits.

Making appointments

We have information on all of our practitioners, a bit about each of the different services, who provides what service on our website. Some of our visiting veterinarians such as the chiropractors and the massage therapists set their own appointments (information is on our website). For acupuncture and physical rehab, call our main number at (703) 662-4494, which is on the website - <https://vhcnova.com/>.

Our Intention

As acceptance of alternative therapy increases, more animals get the benefits. We see an increase in the integrative approach between regular and alternative veterinarian services so that animal health is better and they do better longer.



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Dr. Kocen, DVM, CVA

Dr. Kocen received his Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine. He's practiced in Northern Virginia ever since.

After practicing general small animal medicine for several years, he was certified in veterinary acupuncture in 1990. At the time, Dr. Kocen was the only veterinarian in Northern Virginia providing this service. Over the next few years, he trained in Chinese herbal medicine and homeopathy. The majority of his appointments were people coming for holistic medicine.

Dr. Kocen joined Southpaw's veterinary specialists when they first opened in Springfield in 1995, and he headed the Holistic Medicine Department for 19 years.

To increase the availability of alternative therapies for small animals, Dr. Kocen opened the Veterinary Holistic Center in Northern Springfield. They do not do conventional veterinary medicine. We see ourselves as an extension of conventional veterinary practices.