

## In Bridgewater, Homeopathy for Pets

By: Kathryn Boughton

January 10, 2003

Dogs brought to see veterinarians are often reluctant patients. Many sit trembling between their owner's knees in waiting rooms, while others are hyperactive, leaping about in excitement when other dogs are brought in. Cats tend to crouch in their carriers, peering fearfully at the world or meowing plaintively. But when dogs enter Dr. Anne Hermans's world, they tend to bound down the spacious side yard of her Colonial home in Bridgewater, heading toward the door of her clinic.

"It's a social visit for them," she said as she sat behind her desk in her receiving room last week. "I worked hard to make this a friendly place for my patients. I learn so much watching them when I meet them for the first time. There is room for dogs to move around and explore, and even cats have places they can crawl under to hide."

Observing animals is an important part of diagnosing their ills for Dr. Hermans, who is no ordinary practitioner. Although classically trained in veterinary medicine at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., she has since turned away from conventional medical practices to use homeopathy to treat animals.

Homeopathy is a form of holistic healing, she explained. "Holistic simply means the doctor views the patient as a whole being, rather than viewing the illness as an isolated factor. But there are different methods of treating them holistically. You can even be a holistic allopath (a doctor who treats disease with methods that produce symptoms different from the disease itself). I use homeopathy to treat my patients."

Homeopathy, she said, is based on the teachings of the 19th century German doctor, Samuel Hahnemann, a physician who determined that quinine, useful in treating malaria, will produce the same symptoms as the disease when given in concentrated amounts.

"He was a brilliant man who noted that by giving too much quinine, you produced the same symptoms found in malaria. When he reduced the amount of quinine and used it to treat malaria victims he found it had curative powers without the negative consequences. Homeopathy is based on 'similars.' For instance, lumbago produces heat in the joint and to treat it we apply heat."

In developing cures, a homeopath gives healthy people enough of a substance to produce the "symptomatic pictures" of disease. Such experimentation is termed a "proving." If a substance is "proved," then it is used as a remedy for a "body presenting a similar picture" as the result of disease or injury.

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"We can look at disease from the point of view of the disease or from the point of view of the patient," she said. "Diarrhea, for instance, is the body's way of trying to get rid a virus. When you have a cold, and all that stuff comes out of your head, that is the way the body flushes out disease. So is a fever. Most medicines address disease from the point-of-view of the pathogen, but when we treat disease to kill bacteria, we also kill off a lot of important bacteria in our bodies. Our bodies have tremendous tools to fight disease."

Homeopathy, on the other hand, treats the patient. While homeopaths do not ignore immediate causes such as infection, their primary focus is on the patient's attempts to heal. Their aim is to strengthen the patient's defenses and to shift the balance in favor of recovery, she said. After the body is given a "nudge" in the direction of the disease by being prompted to produce mild disease symptoms, the body sets up natural defenses, she asserted.

Dr. Hermans, who is married and has two children, worked as a conventional vet for eight years before making the move toward homeopathy. "I came to it through personal challenges, because of the health problems of our first child" she said. "We weren't getting the answers we needed so I started working with a naturopath and saw improvement. So, I went 'shopping' and stumbled on homeopathy. It was so intriguing I started using it to treat our family and pets. I started studying it in 1998."

She has completed a "Professional Course in Advanced Veterinary Homeopathy" at the Animal Natural Health Center, as well as the advanced course given by the same center, which offers its courses in locations around the country. She is affiliated with the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy and the International Association of Veterinary Homeopathy, among other organizations.

Homeopathy is appropriate for patients that get the same problems over and over, she said, have undesirable reactions to conventional medicines or suffer illnesses for which there is no well-recognized traditional treatment. It is also useful for those that have problems resulting from receiving vaccines.

"True healing takes time," Dr. Hermans said. "The deeper the pathology, the longer it takes. Most of our animals are severely compromised by poor nutrition and over-vaccination. The first thing is to make an improvement in those, to give the animal as clean a diet as possible. People should avoid giving their pets foods that have lots of additives. How long it takes to get better and the ability to do so varies from patient to patient-even between patients with the same diagnosis-because each patient is an individual."

Often, she said, she is the "doctor of last resort" for animal owners who have exhausted the spectrum of modern veterinary medicine. "So many of the patients that come here are so sick they can't get better. But their companions-or owners, whatever-see how it can help and they will bring another animal that is less ill.

"But we're a quick-fix society," she continued, "and this can take a while to help. So much depends on watching the symptoms. If an owner has watched an animal itching and can't watch one more day, then I'm not the right person to treat their pet. If they can't observe their animal's behavior, I'm not right. But people who love their animals and make that kind of commitment always find a way to watch their animals, even if there

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The initial information gathering is important and can take some time. Dr. Hermans often meets with the owners first, frequently without the animal present. Discussion centers around the pet's health and what homeopathy can do. A one or two-page typed account of the animal, its personality and habits, is helpful.

"I need to know details," she said. "If a cat has kidney problems, telling me that it drinks and pees a lot is not helpful. But telling me that it wants to drink warm water or that it wants its food cold could be helpful. After all, mice don't come refrigerated in the wild and water is not heated, so if the animal wants cold meat or will only drink from the warm water tap, that is different."

The doctor will review the pet's diet with the owner and make recommendations if needed. During a full initial "intake," the pet will be given a physical examination. The intake appointment usually takes 45 to 90 minutes. Follow-up appointments are usually needed every two to three weeks. In some cases, follow-up visits can be done by phone.

For animals in good health "well-pet" visits are recommended.

Because she practices homeopathy exclusively, Dr. Hermans refers her patients to primary care veterinarians for necessary diagnostics such as blood tests and routine care, such as surgery, dentistry, vaccinations or other injections, anti-parasitical products or prescription refills. Emergency or off-hours care is also referred to the primary care veterinarians. She does not have kennels, grooming or in-patient treatment facilities.

Fees begin at \$65 for an introductory appointment, with \$85 charged for a well-pet visit, which includes a physical examination. An initial intake costs \$120, as does case research and analysis.

Dr. Hermans has a web site at [www.vethomeopath.com](http://www.vethomeopath.com) and may be reached at 860-210-1847.