

Golden Retriever News Column: Integrative Care for Golden Retrievers

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November8, 2002

Sports Medicine for Dogs

Part 2: Introduction to Treatment: The Anxiety Wrap™

Introduction: The next few installments of my column will include a comprehensive overview of sports medicine treatment, the professional team members and their roles, current views on treatment modalities and latest research. On January 31-February 2, 2003, the Annual Sports Medicine Symposium will be held at Auburn University. Day one of the symposium is for veterinarians only; the second two days are open to everyone. Reports from this conference will be available on the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine - Department of Clinical Sciences web site. Contact Robert L Gillette, DVM, MSE to subscribe to the Sports Medicine Newsletter (gillerl@vetmed.auburn.edu). This particular column addresses a new piece of equipment that has the potential to impact all areas of care and training of performance and companion animals called The Anxiety Wrap™ developed by Susan Sharpe and Kimberly Ring (www.anxietywrap.com).

The Anxiety Wrap™, Development and Multiple Uses: Susan Sharpe and Kimberly Ring, both Midwest Tellington Touch Practitioners, created this product based on the body wrapping method used by Linda Tellington Jones (1). Tellington-Jones employs elastic bandages wrapped in a crisscross pattern on the dog's trunk.

Insert Figure 1.

The wrap can assist in calming distress, controlling hyperactivity, increasing attention and focus, improving body awareness, enhancing movement ability in arthritic dogs, and decreasing exaggerated responses to noise and motion sickness. I had been using elastic bandages and other equipment that produced maintained pressure over specific body surfaces for 35 years. (2). Humans, canine and equine clients all demonstrated positive adaptive responses to this approach. I found elastic bandages effective but difficult to apply and fit quickly making them less practical for exhibitors with little time to prepare a dog for its performance. I discovered The Anxiety Wrap™ web site in August 2002 while surfing the net and wrote to Susan Sharpe. Susan and Kimberly Ring were in the process of writing an article on their wrap soon to be published in *The Whole Dog Journal*. They wanted to include a theoretical section that presents the putative mode of action for the wrap on the dog's nervous system. Within days of our initial communication, we met to exchange information and to share techniques.

The Neurophysiological Rational for The Anxiety Wrap™ and Tellington-Jones Body

Wrap: The purpose of the sensory receptors located throughout the body is to report the status of the animal's world, both internal (organs, muscles, joints, connective tissue) and external (from the nose, eyes, ears, skin) to the brain. The brain integrates all incoming sensation, interprets its significance and then activates appropriate body systems. There is a constant feedback interaction between the brain and body to fine-tune responses. Touch is one of the earliest sensory inputs to develop and has a profound effect on the animal's development including awareness, consciousness and survival. Every effort must be made to normalize touch responses.

Many factors can influence how easily sensory receptors fire sending their messages to the brain. The brain and spinal cord are called the Central Nervous System (CNS). In addition, there is an Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) that maintains all the body's vital functions. The ANS has two divisions, the sympathetic nervous system (the energy production and expenditure system) and the parasympathetic nervous system (the energy restoration system). When an animal is stressed, the sympathetic division takes over and sends neural messages to receptors to lower the amount of sensation required to produce a response. This action helps ensure survival by reporting potential danger to the CNS. The CNS allows the animal to flee or fight as appropriate. Damage in the CNS, its communicating nerves, chronic pain or stress can all lower the threshold of sensation needed to fire the sensory receptors. This explains why some abused animals, or those experiencing pain, are aversive to being touched.

In theory, maintained pressure acts to calm the sensory receptors by slowing their hypersensitivity. Remember that a chronically stressed dog also perceives potential injury when there may be none. As a result, his "guard is up", which is another way to say his sympathetic nervous system has taken over. The elastic wrap or The Anxiety Wrap™ exert maintained pressure that causes a decline in the sensitivity at the receptors; however, the adaptation at each receptor may vary with the intensity of the stimulus and the area of the body being stimulated. Some areas are far more sensitive than others. For example, the mouth area is highly sensitive with lots of receptors per unit space while the animal's back is less sensitive.

The Many Uses of The Anxiety Wrap™: Figure 2 shows my rescue dog, "Miles" being fitted with the wrap by Kimberly and Susan. Miles has a pathological fear of thunderstorms and having his nails cut. He has bilateral damage to his rear stifles, thoracic vertebrae problems, and a lack of awareness of where he is in space. While wearing the wrap, Miles can negotiate our stairs with increased coordination. So far, I have not seen carry-over to his coordination when he is not wearing the wrap. When I know that a storm is approaching, I place him in his wrap. Recently, he slept through a thunderstorm, something that has never happened before. Before trimming his toenails, I put him in his wrap for 30 minutes. Initially I would apply TTouch over his wrap for about 10 minutes and then trim one toenail, being sure to make it as positive an experience as possible. Now I can trim all his nails and he remains calm throughout the process.

Figure 3 shows another of my Golden Retrievers modeling The Anxiety Wrap™. With this dog, I use the wrap for warm-up before field training. It seems to improve both his attention and focus. Several weeks ago, I had him in the wrap while sending him to retrieve a bumper. A man came up to the

field with his lab and laughed at me. He asked if I had my “swamp collie” in a doggie coat to keep the burrs out of his hair? When he saw the logo on the dog’s coat (Figure 4) he asked me why I was sending an anxious dog out after a bumper. I just laughed then explained about the wrap.

Sharpe and Ring say that the wrap is helpful with: hyperactivity, destructive chewing, barking, fear biting, car sickness, sensitivity to touch, generalized calming, reducing jumping, leash pulling, and aggression. You may have other ideas for its use. Research is planned to test the effectiveness of this product in controlled studies.

References:

1. L. Tellington-Jones, *Getting in TTouch With Your Dog, A Gentle Approach to Influencing Behavior, Health, and Performance* (North Pomfret, VT: Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1999, pps. 82-85.

2. S.D. Farber, *Neurorehabilitation, A Multisensory Approach* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1982) pps. 126-128.