



**By Dr Shawn Messonnier, DVM**

To order additional copies of this or any other ebook,  
please visit my Web site at: <http://www.petcarenaturally.com/ebook>

**SAMPLE COPY**

ã Copyright 2007, All Rights Reserved. No part of this ebook may be used, transferred or reproduced in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without prior written permission of the publisher. Making copies of any part of this ebook for any purpose other than your own personal use and/or electronically forwarding or emailing it to other non-paying recipients is a violation of United States copyright laws. To order additional copies of this or any other ebook, please visit: <http://www.petcarenaturally.com/ebook>

This ebook is sold as is, without warranty of any kind, either express or implied, respecting the contents of this ebook. All content in this ebook should be researched independently by the people reading this material. We provide this information 'as is' and for informational purposes only. It is always best to consult your veterinarian and the information provide in this ebook is not to replace regular visits to your veterinarian.

**Disclaimer:** The information presented in this ebook is for educational purposes only. Before implementing any of the therapies discussed in this book, it is important to see your pet's veterinarian for the proper diagnosis and treatment. All listed doses of medications or supplements mentioned in this book should be verified for accuracy before use, and they should only be used under veterinary supervision to minimize the chance of side effects. The author shall not be held liable or responsible to any person or entity with respect to any loss, damage, or injury caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by any information contained in this ebook.

Please send all suggestions and comments about this ebook to [shawnvet@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shawnvet@sbcglobal.net). We are continually looking for better ways to present natural pet care information and welcome your feedback.

# SAMPLE COPY

## Table of Contents

Biography

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Chapter 1 - Understanding the Holistic Approach To Treating Arthritis

Chapter 2 - Understanding Arthritis

Chapter 3 - Not Arthritis, But Something Else

Chapter 4 - What To Expect From Your Doctor's Visit

Chapter 5 - Conventional Therapies

Chapter 6 - Complementary Therapies

Chapter 7 - Diet and Arthritis

Chapter 8 - Exercise for the Arthritic Pet

Chapter 9 - Tying it All Together

Appendix

References / Bibliography / Suggested Reading

# SAMPLE COPY

## Biography

Dr. Shawn Messonnier graduated in 1987 from Texas A&M University with his doctorate of veterinary medicine. In 1991, he opened *Paws & Claws Animal Hospital*, becoming the first referral hospital for dogs, cats, and exotic pets in Plano, Texas.

After using conventional therapies for several years, Dr. Messonnier became convinced that many pets that were not improving with lifelong use of conventional medications might improve if some type of alternative treatment were available. This desire to improve the quality of his patients' lives led him to become adept at treating pets with a variety of alternative treatments. Due to the success of these therapies, Dr. Messonnier created the *Acupuncture and Holistic Animal Health Care Center*, the only hospital in the area to offer both conventional and alternative therapies for dogs and cats.

Dr. Messonnier is a regular columnist for the *Dallas Morning News*. His column, *The Holistic Pet*, is distributed across North America by Knight Ridder News Service. For several years, he was host of Fox television's "4 Your Pets" pet care show.

He currently hosts his own radio show, *The Natural Vet*, on the Martha Stewart channel on Sirius satellite radio. In addition to practicing medicine, Dr. Messonnier serves on the board of the prestigious international journal *Veterinary Forum*. Dr. Messonnier reaches millions of pet owners each month as the holistic columnist for both *Body & Soul* and *Animal Wellness* magazines!

In addition to authoring numerous articles, Dr. Messonnier has also authored a number of books for both pet owners and veterinarians, including *8 Weeks to a Healthy Dog*, *The Allergy Solution for Dogs*, the award-winning *The Natural Health Bible for Dogs & Cats*, and *The Natural Vet's Guide to Preventing and Treating Cancer in Dogs*. These books teach owners how to care for their pets using safe, natural, alternative treatments for a variety of medical conditions. Pet Together (www.pettogether.net/healthypet), a leading manufacturer of natural pet products, has hired Dr. Messonnier as a medical consultant.

Dr. Messonnier is also a speaker and consultant. His popular lectures teach veterinarians and pet owners how holistic care can reduce the cost of veterinary care and help pets live longer, healthier lives. His lecture style is unique, often combining humor and magic to enforce his message. He challenges those he works with to be the best they can be, rising above any challenges they may face. He is committed to providing the best health care for his patients.

Dr. Messonnier regularly consults with pet owners around the world to help them choose the most holistic pet therapies.

# SAMPLE COPY

You may contact Dr. Messonnier about speaking and consulting at:

2145 West. Park Blvd.  
Plano, TX. 75075  
972-867-8800

email: [shawnvvet@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shawnvvet@sbcglobal.net)  
<http://www.petcarenaturally.com>

## Introduction

Arthritis is a common medical problem in dogs and cats. There are many complementary therapies useful for the arthritic pet, including antioxidants, herbal preparations, homeopathic remedies, magnetic therapy, raw food and glandular supplements, and acupuncture. Which therapy or therapies will be of most help to your pet will depend upon a number of factors and should be determined after careful consultation with your veterinarian.

Throughout this book, I have tried to present information in a truly holistic fashion, remaining as objective as possible.

For some therapies, there exists a large body of well designed, scientifically coordinated research studies. For other therapies we do not have these controlled studies but rather rely on clinical experience. Still some therapies show promise in people but their effectiveness in pets is unknown but may be promising. I have discussed these points with the respective therapies throughout the book.

My hope is that you and your doctor will find a complementary therapy that can help your arthritic pet and reduce the need for potentially more harmful medical therapies. Each pet is an individual and must be treated as such, and what works for one pet may not be helpful for another pet. I am confident with the large number of complementary therapies available, you will find one that can help your pet.

Information is always changing, and new treatments are popping up as I write this book. Future editions will update you with important and promising new therapies for your pet.

I would appreciate hearing from any of my readers on how I can improve future editions, so that we can make the world a healthier, more holistic place for our pets

Shawn Messonnier, D.V.M.

# SAMPLE COPY

## About Natural Supplements

Throughout this book I have mentioned a number of natural supplements that can assist the pet with arthritis. I have tried to be as objective as possible, and have tried to refrain from promoting any particular products. Still every doctor has his favorites that have worked best in his practice, and I have pointed these out when necessary. Since there are many products available to help your pet, I encourage you to work with your doctor to find the best products that are most suitable for your pet.

Natural Therapy of the Arthritic Pet

My Wednesday morning began with one of my favorite pets. Jake is a 10-year-old Labrador retriever. On this morning, his owner shared with me that Jake seemed to be having more difficulty getting around. This is not an uncommon complaint from owners of older, large breed dogs. Many of these pets do exhibit varying degrees of lameness as they age. Many times the cause is something simple such as hip dysplasia or arthritis. Other times something more sinister such as cancer or degeneration of the spinal nerves is the culprit.

To help determine the cause of Jake's lameness, he was sedated and radiographs (X-rays) of his hips and spine were taken. In Jake's case, these simple radiographs showed mild hip dysplasia with secondary arthritis. Because Jake's owner was holistic-minded and preferred natural therapies over medications when possible, I started Jake on a regimen of fatty acids and nutritional supplements. Within a few weeks he was moving around much better, and would never experience any of the side effects that can be seen in pets that are prescribed chronic therapy with anti-arthritic medications.

Lameness due to arthritis is a very common symptom in older dogs. Interestingly, we are seeing more arthritis in older cats as well. While younger dogs and cats can also become lame from a variety of causes, as is the case in people, the joints of our aging pets begin to show the wear and tear of activity that has occurred over a number of years. Many of these older dogs have lived with joint instability, specifically that caused by hip dysplasia or spinal problems, for a number of years, often without the owner even knowing the pet had any underlying problems.

Because lameness caused by arthritis is a common finding in the geriatric pet, and because many doctors are not comfortable treating geriatric pets, older dogs and cats are often ignored and not treated properly. Instead of performing diagnostic testing to determine the cause and the severity of the problem, and instead of searching for the least harmful treatment options, many doctors just try to make these pets comfortable for whatever time the pet has left. While there is nothing wrong with making pets comfortable, there is no reason to think our geriatric pets with arthritis are on their last legs. Many of these pets can still have months to years of good quality living IF doctors treat them as they would any other (young) pet. There is no reason for doctors to reach for the "magic shot" of corticosteroids or other potentially harmful medications such as non-steroidal medications if other more natural, safer alternatives are available.

This book will explore the most common treatment options available for arthritic dogs and cats. By wisely combining conventional and alternative treatment options, we can properly diagnose the lame pet's problems and attempt to ease their discomfort without cutting short their lives.

*The primary responsibility of the doctor is to take care of his patients.*

# Chapter 1

## Understanding the Holistic Approach To Treating Arthritis

When it comes to treating the arthritic pet, owners truly have a number of options. The reason for the large amount of options is that there is truly no one "best" treatment for every pet. I share the holistic belief that each pet is an individual, and must be treated as such. I discuss this philosophy with owners right from the start. What worked for the last arthritic dog or cat I treated may not work for their pets. Additionally, each owner is different and has different wants and a different budget for the pet. Some owners want to do everything possible for the pet. Money is not an object, and they will often allow us to experiment and try quite a number of unique treatments. Others opt for a bit less, and may not mind the pet taking medications such as corticosteroids or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for the long haul. Still others never want any medications, but will only opt for more natural therapies such as acupuncture or homeopathy.

I should point out before proceeding that the truly holistic view, desired by most pet owners, involves looking at all options and choosing what works best with the fewest side effects. I'm a conventional doctor by training, and conventional therapies work well for a number of pets. Drugs such as corticosteroids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) are not by nature harmful when used correctly. Some pets are more difficult to medicate than others; owners of these pets may choose to treat their arthritic pets "as needed" with long-acting injectable corticosteroids. However, when trying to do the best, most natural and holistic thing for the pet, it would be wise to consider all options before giving up and resigning ourselves to chronic steroid or NSAID therapy for the arthritic pet. I believe that what I do, combine and offer both conventional and alternative therapies to owners, is the best of both worlds. By knowing the pro's and cons of both types of medical care, the owner and I can work together and pick the therapy that they are most comfortable with, and that is most beneficial to the pet. Keep in mind too, that "holistic" doesn't necessarily mean "alternative". A truly holistic approach looks at trying to heal the entire pet, and not just cover up symptoms. A truly holistic approach chooses what's best for the pet, trying to give the pet relief while minimizing side effects. Conventional drug therapy can be a part of the holistic approach to the treatment of arthritis IF the goal is to help the pet become a healthier pet and not just cover up symptoms while ignoring the pet's well being.

The problems I have with the conventional therapy of arthritis are numerous. First, many doctors fail to get a proper diagnosis. Maybe these doctors don't want owners to have to spend much money in diagnosing their pets' problems. Maybe the doctors just decide that the pet's have arthritis, and figure it's easy enough to treat that with corticosteroids or other medication that relieve pain and inflammation and hope the pet doesn't experience any serious side effects. However, these are not excuses for failing to diagnose and treat the pet correctly. While arthritis is certainly the most common diagnosis in older, lame pets, other more serious conditions can also cause lameness. These other causes include but are not limited to bone infections (bacterial or fungal), bone cysts, bone tumors, fractures, ligamentous injuries (cruciate injuries), and joint instability (hip dysplasia, shoulder dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, osteochondritis). Every doctor can refer those cases he's uncomfortable handling.

It is quite troubling that so many pets I see have not received a proper diagnosis, but are being treated for months or years with potentially harmful therapies. A good number of these pets have not ever had ANY diagnostic tests done. Yet often a simple radiograph (X-ray), a test that any doctor is able to perform, will reveal the cause of the pet's lameness. There is simply no excuse for failing to obtain a proper diagnosis prior to chronic treatment of a pet.

So the bottom line is this: before we condemn a pet to chronic corticosteroid or non-steroidal drug therapy, even if that is what the owner desires, we at the very least need to get a proper diagnosis and make sure that our treatment choice is correct.

# **SAMPLE COPY**



## Chapter 2

### Understanding Arthritis

Arthritis, or more correctly osteoarthritis or degenerative joint disease (DJD), is a common condition in older pets. Arthritis technically means "inflammation of the joint." So when we talk about arthritis, we are talking about an inflammatory disease. Inflammation is characterized by swelling, stiffness, and pain. When treating pets with arthritis, our therapy must seek to counteract these effects of inflammation. Ideally, it would also be advantageous if the therapy could slow down the progression of the arthritis or if possible, actually help the joint to heal. Most conventional therapies do a great job of treating inflammation and pain but rarely help the joint to heal. In many cases, these anti-inflammatory therapies actually cause more cartilage damage as time progresses. Many complementary therapies, conversely, not only relieve pain and inflammation but actually supply nutrients to help the cartilage heal and slow down the destructive forces of nature which act to destroy the injured joint.

A joint is the space between 2 bones. Joints commonly affected with arthritis include the knee, shoulder, ankle, elbow, and most commonly, the hips. The joints between the vertebrae of the backbone also commonly develop arthritis.

*Arthritis is a painful, inflammatory disease.*

The components of the joint include the bones of the joint, ligaments from surrounding muscles which cross the joint space and attach to the bones, and the joint capsule which encloses the joint. The joint capsule contains a thick protective outer layer and a thin inner layer called the synovial membrane. The synovial membrane contains blood vessels and nerves and makes synovial...

**For the complete version of this or any other ebook,  
please visit my Web site at: <http://www.petcarenaturally.com/ebook>**

# SAMPLE COPY