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Canine Bowen Technique (CBT | Bowen Technique for Dogs)

Canine Bowen Technique is a soft-tissue remedial therapy involving 'light-touch' moves of fingers or thumbs over muscle, ligament, tendon and/or fascia at specific points of the dog's body.

The work is very subtle and involves no hard or prolonged pressure. It offers dogs a gentle, non-invasive and effective hands-on technique that aims to promote healing, pain-relief and body/energy rebalancing.

What Is CBT?

CBT is based on the principles of the Bowen Technique, a successful human therapy named after its Australian developer, Tom Bowen. The Bowen Technique was brought to Europe in the early 1990's. Its adaptation in the UK for use on dogs was started in 2001 by Bowen therapists and dog trainers/behaviourists Sally and Ron Askew, with the cooperation and support of their local vets.

CBT is a holistic form of therapy. By "holistic" we mean that it "treats the body as a whole, without referral to named disease". So *CBT* therapists do not treat the veterinary-diagnosed disease or condition per se, but treat the dog, as they see it, on the day.

For example, although a dog may be brought with a condition such as rear-leg lameness, an *CBT* therapist may well treat other parts of the body as well, including the back, neck, and front-legs, in order to address other possible problem areas caused as a result of the dog compensating for the presenting condition. In this case the dog may well have tried to shift its weight forward in order to relieve the pain in the rear-legs, but this, in turn, will affect the carriage of the head and neck, and require the front-legs to carry more load. By addressing these other areas, we are maximising the dog's attempts to return its body to proper balance.

What happens in a CBT session?

Using fingers and thumbs on precise points on the dog's body, an *CBT* therapist applies gentle rolling movements over soft tissue (muscles, ligaments, tendons, fascia, and skin). The move is not a flick, but done slowly and with a very gentle pressure so as to just disturb the underlying tissue and create a focus for the brain to work on. There is no hard manipulation, no pulling or cracking of joints, no insertion of needles, no massaging with oils.

Although a typical consultation will last up to about an hour, while the therapist gets to know more about you and your dog, and your dog can get accustomed to and relaxed with the therapist, the actual hands-on part of the session will usually last no more than about 20 minutes. Over the following 3-4 days the dog may experience reactions as its body continues to assimilate the effects of the *CBT* moves and realigns/rebalances itself. This healing process continues for about 7 days until treatment is continued. The average number of treatments required to obtain noticeable change is one or two.

During the treatment session, there are short intervals - determined either by the dog or by the therapist - which allow the dog to absorb the information given by the gentle moves, and allow fine adjustments to take place within its body. Dogs are much more in tune with their bodies than humans, and generally know for themselves when to "take a break", and when to come back for more. Often, after just a few moves, they will wander off and just stare blankly into space, or go somewhere for a short lie-down.

Therapy is never forced on the dog - this will only serve to make the dog less receptive and will be counter-productive to the outcome. So an important part of *Canine Bowen Technique* is recognising and respecting when the dog indicates it has received what it needs.

At the start of a *CBT* session, there will need to be time to allow the dog to accept and trust the therapist. For very nervous dogs, most of the time of a first *CBT* session may well be spent solely on developing this relationship and very little Bowen work may be done. However, after getting accustomed to *CBT* most dogs will want it more and more, and many will come over and position themselves to indicate where they'd like the work doing.



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The use of CBT

CBT aims to promote and support the body's own powers of self-healing and as a result may be very useful for dogs with problems in the following areas:

Acute injury eg sprains and strains | Chronic conditions and degenerative disease - helping to improve the dog's quality of life | Rescue/re-homed dogs - relaxation of tension caused by earlier stress and trauma | Pre- and post-operative surgery - assisting recovery times | Fear-based anxiety - such as fireworks and thunderstorms.

However, CBT therapists will not claim to be able to "cure" a problem. Our aim instead is to facilitate the marshalling and channelling of the dog's own resources so that it can determine how to heal itself. In this respect, therefore, CBT can be almost all-embracing in its coverage. Although generally regarded as a 'remedial' therapy, CBT can also be used to good effect as a maintenance and prevention therapy, helping to keep the body in optimum balance. To this end, it may be very beneficial for active, hard-working dogs or dogs used for competitions in obedience, agility, or trialling.

Common conditions which are often presented at CBT sessions include

Allergies and Skin conditions | Arthritis and Muscular Sprains & Strains | Back problems | Lameness and other Gait problems | Hip & Elbow Dysplasia | Working or Competition dogs | Dogs that pull on the lead | Aggression and other Behavioural problems | Stress, Anxiety & Jalousie disorders | Cystitis & Urinary disorders | Recurrent Ear problems | Sciatica, a.s.o.

Obviously, veterinary-diagnosed conditions such as joint dysplasia will not be 'cured' by CBT. Nevertheless CBT may be very beneficial for dogs with these sorts of conditions, because the rebalancing/optimising effects both locally and elsewhere in its body may help to improve its quality of life.

CBT in combination with other treatment Methods

- As the CBT is a manual technique, it is best not combined with other physical techniques such as physiotherapy, massage, acupuncture, osteopathy, chiropraxy, Tellington Touch, etc.
- + The CBT can very well be combined with treatment methods that work on different levels such as school medicine, Feldenkrais, BFB, Chin Balance (Kiefer R.E.S.E.T.), school medicine, homeopathy, herbal medicine, aroma therapy, etc.

Aftercare Advice

A Bowen treatment is a partnership. When treating humans it is a two-way partnership - between therapist and client. With dogs it is a three-way partnership - between therapist, dog, and owner.

Your CBT therapist will give you some post-session advice with regard to your dog and how it should be looked after over the following few days. Carrying out these aftercare recommendations is just as much a part of the treatment as the hands-on session. If the owner is unwilling to abide these instructions then the effect of the session will be wasted.

For instance, after a CBT session, most dogs will probably feel tired and want to go off somewhere quiet and have a nap. This is very good news, since sleep is the time when most of the body's repair actions take place, and the dog's apparent tiredness shows it is accepting the Bowen work. If, however, the owner insists that their dog accompany them on a long walk on the beach, maybe because they're feeling sorry for the dog and want to "make up" for it not feeling well, then the dog will not get the time it needs to repair itself, and may well reinjure itself as well.

So please be prepared to listen to and accept the advice of the therapist.

Information from www.caninebowentechnique.com