

The importance of TTouch groundwork.

Posted: 17 November 2015

These are simple exercises created to encourage the body to explore a wide range of movements. It is important that they are performed slowly and without stress.

To understand how this can help our animals we must look in more detail at an aspect of our nervous system concerned with proprioception.

Proprioception could also be called body awareness as it is the body's ability to sense where its various parts are in space.

Every part of the body has an area of the brain dedicated to the movement and sensations of that part. Every movement we make is registered by the brain. The more that a particular body part is used the more information it sends to the corresponding area of the brain and larger that area becomes.

The joints and muscles have an enormous range of movement possibilities, but repetitive movement patterns lead to limited information being stored in the brain and therefore limited movement choices being available.

In terms of our animals this can be observed in a number of ways:

- Poor co-ordination (often dismissed as clumsiness).

- Inflexibility/stiffness.

- Physical discomfort leading to a tendency to be less active.

- A sense of physical insecurity leading to a lack of confidence and anxiety when asked to try new things.

The TTouch groundwork exercises give the brain more detailed information about the range of movement possibilities available, this increases body awareness which gives the animal more choices and thus more physical confidence.

So why is it important to perform these exercises slowly?

When a movement is performed quickly it is very difficult to have any real awareness of how controlled it was. If there is any discomfort it's very difficult to pinpoint at what stage the discomfort began and at what stage it stopped.

If we want to increase the amount of detailed information in the brain then moving slowly enables the muscular and skeletal sensations to be experienced with greater clarity, the movement can then be performed with greater control.

As an animal with poor body awareness is often unconfident and uncoordinated, moving slowly gives the brain time to experience the movement choices available which will improve body awareness and increases it's sense of control and builds confidence.

An additional benefit of TTouch exercises is that stimulating the brain through new physical experiences not only enhances physical potential it increases capacity for mental learning as well.

TTouch exercises are beneficial in all circumstances:

A fit and healthy dog will find the experience mentally stimulating and incorporating different routines on a regular basis will enhance general performance and maintain good coordination and flexibility.

For a dog presenting a state of physical imbalance the exercises will give the brain more information about the range of movement possibilities which increases the animals ability to make different movement choices, this helps break negative habitual patterns and creates a more balanced physical state.

In the case of an injury, the protective mechanisms of stiffness/pain/weakness are all responses to impaired or disrupted sensory information from the affected limb. By moving slowly and gently the body has the opportunity to discover small movements which are safe, this information is fed to the central nervous system which then

responds by reducing the protective mechanisms. This translates as reduced healing time and less overcompensating pressure on the rest of the body.

Go back