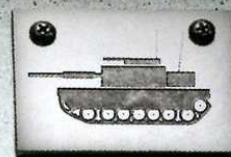
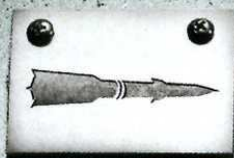


# Newsweek®

05.02.2014

## THE ART OF FINANCIAL WARFARE

HOW THE WEST IS PUSHING  
PUTIN'S BUTTONS



## DOWNWARD-FACING DOGS

# Yoga, pup-lates and acupuncture for pets aren't too much of a stretch

**ORGANIC FOOD**, prepared as simply as possible or, preferably, left raw. Frequent sessions with a spiritually inclined fitness practitioner, working toward the health of both mind and body. Non-traditional healing techniques rather than those of Western medicine. And of course, regular detoxifying cleanses. That may sound like a health regimen penned by Gwyneth Paltrow (whose online publication Goop is a paean to self-actualization, a process that now seems to include divorce), but it's actually the discipline for a different kind of animal: the American dog.

In recent years, upscale pet owners have been turning to alternative treatments and seeking out services like acupuncture, yoga classes and even cleanses for their beloved companions. Dr. Jeffrey Levy, a veterinarian and certified veterinary acupuncturist in New York City, has seen a marked increase in patients. "I have pet owners tell me all the time about how transformative acupuncture has been for their pets," he says. "They'll pick up a toy they haven't played with in years, or start digging in the dirt like a much-younger animal. The pets are really rejuvenated by the treatments."

Though he doesn't rely on acupuncture exclusively and cautions patients against using the treatment without exploring possible underlying causes of any problems, Levy argues that it can be highly effective, particularly for pain management and orthopedic conditions, such as arthritis.

Marlo Fogelman, the owner of a Boston-based marketing and communications firm, saw results with her shih-poo, Lulu. "Lulu developed a back



problem that was causing her so much pain she would yelp when she was touched." Unwilling to rely on the medication prescribed by her vet, Fogelman started looking for an animal acupuncturist. "Once we started her on acupuncture, Lulu's yelping went away almost immediately. It's taken away her pain, and we didn't have to use drugs."

BY  
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Dog yoga is a lot like yoga for infants, in that the pet "parent" moves the animal through the poses, or involves them in their own poses.



DALE DE LA REY/AFP/GETTY

Another popular alternative-health options is dog yoga ("doga"). Suzi Teitelman, who claims to have founded the discipline in 2001, says it will lead to happier, healthier pets that are more bonded to their owners. She compares dog yoga to infant yoga; pet parents move the animals through the poses or involve them in their own poses.

Shanna Olson, a Hollywood "dog mom" to two Pomeranians, raves about dogo. "Jack is very high-strung, and since we've been doing dogo, he seems much less nervous and anxious," she says. "He used to lick the walls when I would leave, but now that's stopped. And Isabella has always been a little overweight. This has been great exercise for her."

Doga isn't the only new age fitness option available. Jaime Van Wye, CEO and founder of the Zoom Room dog training center, offers "pup-lates," a canine variant of Pilates. "Pup-lates combines physical fitness and low-impact agility training," Van Wye says. "It's great for older animals, animals with attention issues and overweight animals who might not have the stamina for higher-impact activities."

Not everyone is enthusiastic about these therapies. Louise Murray, vice president of the ASP-CA Animal Hospital in New York City, cautions pet owners that more research into all of these treatments is needed. "There is some evidence of possible benefits from acupuncture, but there just haven't been enough well-designed studies on the topic," she says. "At this point, we are a long way from safe, educated use of any alternative medical approach for dogs and cats. These fields are yet to be fully explored even in human medicine."

Though Murray cautions pet owners that acupuncture, like any treatment, comes with risks, her most insistent warning is against another alternative treatment that has been gaining in popularity: animal detoxes.

Proponents claim that toxins from the environment (ranging from heavy metals in unfiltered water to common medications or vaccines) build up in animals' bodies, in particular the liver. Treating the animal with diet changes and herbal supplements—popular supplements include turmeric, milk thistle, stinging nettle and dandelion—is meant to flush these toxins out, improving both overall health and specific conditions attributed to the toxins.

"Pets are naked; they don't wear protective footwear to avoid lawn pesticides and herbicides, and they can't choose the health of their environment," says Dr. Karen Becker, a

Chicago-based wellness veterinarian. "The sad truth is, every pet would probably have measurable amounts of chemicals in their bodies if we were to actually check for them."

Becker cautions pet owners against attempting to detox their animals on their own, since "there's a lot of potential for animals to be detoxed incorrectly," but says when it's undertaken with a professional, there shouldn't be any significant risk to the animal.

## "ONCE WE STARTED HER ON ACUPUNCTURE, LULU'S YELPING WENT AWAY ALMOST IMMEDIATELY."

Murray paints the risks of self-administered detoxing in starker terms. "There is zero evidence that there is any benefit to these products. Additionally, there is no evidence that these products are safe for animals," she says, referring to over-the-counter herbs and supplements marketed to pets. "Herbal products and nutraceuticals are not regulated, and there is no guarantee of their safety, effectiveness or manufacturing process."

Murray, along with Nancy Scanlan, executive director of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, suggest that pet owners considering any of these treatments—acupuncture, pet yoga or detoxes—do so only with a trained and licensed veterinarian, since amateur practitioners may cause serious harm to pets.

The other downside to all these alternative therapies is the cost. Spending on pets in the U.S. continues to rise precipitously. Just 20 years ago, in 1994, pet owners spent a little over \$27 billion (in today's dollars) on their animals. In 2014, the American Pet Products Association is projecting spending of nearly \$59 billion. Alternative treatments are helping to inflate that bottom line. Providers and pet owners reported acupuncture costs ranging from \$90 to \$185 for a single appointment; dogo and pup-lates classes can cost \$12 to \$25 per session; and detoxifying treatments can run you as much as \$120 for a month's supply.

Considering the high cost of these and other popular alternative treatments—including pet massage, pet reiki and pet crystal therapy—one thing's for certain: You're going to want to consider a second mortgage on the doghouse. **N**