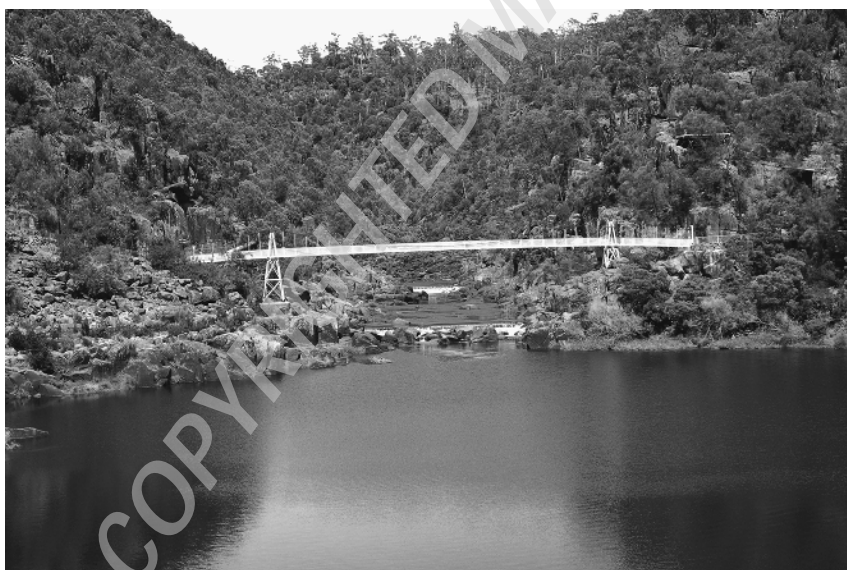


Chapter 1

The *Yin* and *Yang* of Pet Care



Human beings are born [because of] the accumulation of Chi. When it accumulates there is life. When it dissipates there is death. . . . There is one Chi that connects and pervades everything in the world. . . . The highest Yin is the most restrained. The highest Yang is the most exuberant. The restrained comes forth from Heaven. The exuberant issues forth from Earth. The two intertwine and penetrate forming a harmony, and [thus] things are born.

—Zhuangzi, 4th century B.C.

Zhuangzi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, connected the vital energy known as *chi* to the elemental creative forces of the universe. He saw *yin* as the yielding or feminine universal force, *yang* as the exuberant or male universal force, and *chi* as the pervasive, healing, and animating energy that makes life itself possible *within* that universe. Whether or not you consider it “Western” or “Eastern,” Zhuangzi’s sketch of the universe remains useful even thousands of years later. It is a pragmatic, reality-based way to address questions of health and wellness. It is not the only way to address those questions, of course, but it is *one* way of addressing them, and it has delivered extraordinarily positive results to people and animals for a very long time.

Many people wonder: What do Zhuangzi’s ideas really have to offer me and my pet? The answer is *balance*.

When you look at the classic yin-yang symbol shown here, you can see it: balance, movement, interdependence, and interconnection. If you look carefully, you may also see in this timeless symbol an intriguing alternative to some familiar notions of a stagnant, fixed existence. Michelangelo painted God as an old man with a beard who reclined majestically, a king who towered physically above His creation. Eastern thought envisions something very different: an intertwining divine *process*.

Zhuangzi, along with many other great Eastern thinkers, calls your attention to a process of continuous universal creativity. This is a process in which *harmony* is the most sublime outcome, a process in which the life force that animates human beings is the same force that enlivens a plant, a river—and, yes, a pet such as a dog, a cat, or a horse. Yin and yang are what make that process possible. You have probably seen the yin-yang symbol on jewelry, on food products, in books, and in a thousand other places, but you likely do not always ask yourself: What does the symbol really *mean*? Is it a fad, a trademark,



The yin-yang symbol represents balance, movement, interdependence, and interconnection.



The Characteristics of *Yin* and *Yang*

Yin is traditionally identified with . . .

- “Inside-ness” (for example, internal organs)
- Night
- Cold
- Deficiency
- Chronic conditions
- Reduced stature
- Moistness
- Rest

Yang is traditionally identified with . . .

- “Outside-ness” (for example, skin)
- Day
- Heat
- Excess
- Acute conditions
- Expanded stature
- Dryness
- Activity

or a shrewd piece of corporate branding? Actually, it is an ancient symbol of harmony and balance. The round shape of the symbol represents the globe and the larger universe. *Yin*—the dark component—contains an element of light. *Yang*—the light component—contains an element of darkness. Together, they describe the opposing, complementary qualities in natural phenomena.

The yin-yang symbol reminds you that all things are constantly in motion, and that there needs to be a balance in everything that evolves and cycles in your life. Everyday experience gives you plenty of examples of these cycles: night follows day, activity follows rest, leisure follows productivity. These phenomena follow each other in sequence. In

other words, without one, the other cannot take place. The **interaction** of the *yin* and *yang* is what brings the living world into being.

In Eastern philosophy, there is no designation of which is “supposed to” come first, *yin* or *yang*. The real question is how *yin* and *yang* **relate to each other** in order to maintain balance and harmony. You may encounter this question of harmony over and over again during the day, without realizing that it is really *yin* and *yang* playing out in your life. For example: How do you balance work and free time? The more work you do the less free time you have; if you’re not careful, your life can fall out of balance. Suppose you overcompensate: You will quickly learn that too much play can also put stress on your life. How can you survive without focusing appropriately on your monetary income? The same potential for harmony—or disharmony—exists in virtually every area of your life: time alone, time with others; consuming calories and burning calories; taking and giving; teaching and learning. As a human being, you attempt to find a balance between these opposites.

Life well lived is not a destination, but a process of finding balance. You can probably think of famous people whose lives have fallen seriously *out* of balance; you can likely also call to mind personal encounters with people who seemed *in* balance, who possessed a deep inner reservoir of purpose, calm, and equilibrium.

What is the source of that harmony? Do you feel it, or live it, or both? In the end, you may find that the best way to “get there” is simply to keep the influences of *yin* and *yang* cycling.

Yin and *yang* are all about balance. They are part of a process. Restoring balance to your life, finding balance with the environment in which you live, aligning yourself and your environment with something larger than yourself, something vast that is already in balance—these are the principles that can improve your pet’s quality of life, and your own.

So how do you find this balance? By harnessing *chi*—the universal life force, the pervasive healing energy. The greatest goal of Eastern medicine is to use *chi* to restore balance and harmony to your life. It is not a strange, foreign, or untested principle. To the contrary, it has been “field tested” for thousands of years and has delivered extraordinary results to people, and to animals, in many different cultures and across a huge span of history.

The Power of *Chi*: Case Studies from My Practice

The world has obstacles, and every day you are battling around, over, and through these obstacles. These ongoing battles can cause a strain in a body's system over time. *Chi* helps you—and your pet—to repair the system. This idea of harnessing *chi* to restore balance and wellness is worth a closer look. Let me share a few case studies from my own practice that can give you a clearer picture of the power of *chi*.

Cornflake

Cornflake was an elderly horse who had been having persistent intestinal problems. A friend asked me to take a look at him and share any thoughts I might have about changes that could improve his condition.

Another veterinarian had already seen Cornflake; the drugs he prescribed had done little to improve the chronic intestinal blockages that were making Cornflake's life miserable. None of the drugs seemed to work; the horse's condition had only deteriorated. The only option that the other veterinarian could present at this stage was surgery. As it happened, this other veterinarian had been focusing exclusively on the *disorder* Cornflake had presented: *colic* (persistent abdominal pain). I wanted to take a broader look at the *environment* in which Cornflake



Cornflake's intestinal problems were solved through changes to his diet and his environment.

was living and see the effect that imbalances in his environment were possibly having on his overall state of wellness.

To do that, I asked a different set of questions than the other veterinarian had been asking. Instead of asking, “How do we get rid of the colic?” I had to ask, “Where is this horse spending most of his time, and what is the flow of *chi* in that environment?”

The answer to that question gave me my first clue as to what treatment I was going to recommend. I saw that this elderly horse was spending most of his day in a small, cramped stall. The owners came in to clean the stall every day and had Cornflake exercise minimally during these times. He had little opportunity to move during the course of the average day, and the air in the stall was stale, stagnant, and oppressive. That was not conducive to good *chi* flow because clutter and stagnation impede that flow!

Cornflake’s physical surroundings were not meaningless details; they were a critical part of the overall question of balance. (I’ll explain this concept, called *feng shui*, in more detail later in this chapter.) The idea of trying to examine or treat the horse without examining or “treating” the physical environment where he was spending most of his time was counterproductive. The fact of the matter was that the circulation of life energy in the tiny space to which this old fellow had been confined was severely restricted, and that restriction was a big part of the problem. *There was no way for me to restore balance to Cornflake’s intestinal system without also making some changes to his environment.* *Chi* was not flowing properly through the environment, which meant that *chi* was not flowing properly through the animal. Eastern medicine holds that no organism can thrive in a static environment. There needs to be a good flow of energy in the environment to support healing and balance, and physical movement is a part of supporting that flow.

The first thing I told the owners to do was to change the environment where Cornflake spent most of his day. We opened things up and got Cornflake into a corral area where he could move around more freely. The owner also started a daily exercise program with him. He was no longer eating in the same tiny space where he was “doing his business.” He was moving around; he had newer, high-quality hay; and he was given better, fresher food to eat (food with all the nutrients still intact).

After months of increasing problems with colic, Cornflake made rapid improvement after we made these improvements to his environment.

It was not *merely* the change in diet that made the change in Cornflake's condition possible; my experience is that other veterinarians facing similar conditions have changed a horse's diet, but have not seen the rapid improvement that I saw. There is no one "recipe" for a specific ailment like the one Cornflake was suffering from; what makes the difference is a willingness to look at a unique situation—the animal *and* its environment—and to see the individual parts as elements of a single process that can be restored to harmony. The simple (but seemingly nontraditional) treatment, which involved no surgery and no drugs, solved the problem. It wasn't a miracle—it was the restoration of balance between the animal and his environment. Simply changing the diet was not enough. I had to change the physical space in which the horse spent his day. Questions about *how* this step improved energy flow, or what specifically allows energy to do what it does when the environment changes, are certainly valid, but they are of lesser concern to me as a practitioner than the end results I can help to bring about by channeling this energy more effectively. Perhaps someday a researcher can conduct a clinical study to evaluate the effects of changing the physical environment in such cases.

While he was cramped in his smelly stall, Cornflake had minimal access to the *chi* that would return him to a state of balance. Once we got him out into the fresh air and made some simple changes to his diet, he regained that balance and wellness.

Julio

Malvina's Pug, Julio, was a sweet dog with a weight problem. Actually, Malvina, a reporter in her 30s, had a weight problem, too. Both of them were living a rather sedentary, low-energy lifestyle. It was a shared lifestyle that involved a lot of sitting, since Malvina worked from home. The two just didn't get outdoors much . . . and they didn't circulate much *chi*.

I told Malvina that she needed to change her daily routine with Julio by going out for a lot more walks. I also told her that she needed to make sure that Julio cut back on calories. By focusing on her *relationship* with her dog and not merely on Julio's symptoms, Malvina was able to make some changes in Julio's surroundings.

But that wasn't the only change that occurred. Since Malvina was the one taking Julio for his walks, *she* was getting out for more walks as



The restored movement of *chi* in Julio and his environment has helped Julio and Malvina, his owner, live a more balanced and healthier lifestyle.

well. She was changing her own routine and her own surroundings. It's true enough to say that both of them were getting more exercise. It's also true to say that both Malvina and Julio were benefiting from a daily routine that improved their *chi* flow.

After only a few months, Julio's weight was down—and so was Malvina's. The two were happier, healthier, and more active. Today, they're both doing a better job of controlling their weight. Better circulation of the healing force known as *chi* has been a big part of their shared success.

Mermos

Carol's cat, Mermos, had severe asthma. Instead of simply "treating" the cat during an office visit and making a list of symptoms, I asked to take a look at Mermos's living environment.

Carol lived with Mermos in a one-bedroom condominium. It was small and very cluttered with boxes stacked everywhere. Instead of prescribing drugs to Mermos, I gave Carol a "prescription": Improve the flow of *chi* in the space where Mermos spent virtually all of her time. I asked Carol to work with me to find some simple ways to enhance the flow of life energy in that tiny condo.

First I gave her some ideas about how she could maximize the energy flow in the living space. She moved things around; she cleared out a lot

of the clutter; and she even took my advice to remove some carpeting and some drapes that were impeding *chi* flow. It may sound implausible at first, but removing that carpeting and those curtains made it easier for life energy to move more freely within that once-stagnant space.

Within a matter of weeks, Mermos started looking and feeling better. Previously the cat had to use an inhaler daily or weekly, but she now needs that inhaler only occasionally. This dramatic improvement in the animal's quality of life (and, by extension, the owner's) was the result of some simple changes in the animal's diet and physical living space. Here, the cycle of yin and yang in the living space had been thrown off so dramatically that it was literally draining energy from the body of the cat. The changes in diet, which included fresher food (and specifically, fresh protein sources), supported a more effective use of Mermos's energy, but I believe the changes in her environment had a more profound effect on removing the stagnation that had been robbing the cat of her life force.



A dietary and environmental change helped Mermos better acclimate and keep her asthma under control.

Chi Is All Around You . . . but What Is It?

Chi, the life energy that you need to begin healing yourself and your pet, is all around you, but people often don't take advantage of it. I believe a big part of the reason for this is because we simply don't understand this energy.

When I try to explain *chi* to the pet owners I'm working with, people sometimes start to tune out as though I'm speaking a foreign language. I can talk about energy and balance and healing force, but the pet owner simply doesn't have a point of reference. When I mention that *chi* "flows" through the body, the pet owner might start looking a little more engaged. He or she might ask a question like, "You mean it's like the blood flow in the body?"

Chi is somewhat like blood flow—but bigger than that. *Chi* is literally propelling the blood to flow in the body. This flowing movement can be found in many other processes, not all of which take tangible, physical form. As the three case studies I just shared with you suggest, **simple changes in the environment can have a profound effect on *chi* flow, and thus on overall wellness.** You are probably better off thinking of *chi* as an energy force that the environment either makes easier or makes more difficult for you to access.

Look again at Carol and Mermos's story, earlier. Changing the physical environment in Carol's condo had a huge impact on the flow of *chi* in that living space, and on Mermos's health. This brings us to one of the critical points of this book: Removing clutter is good for your pet's health! Many pet owners in the West are surprised, and a little skeptical, when I tell them that clutter in the home is a major obstacle to a pet's health and well-being. The truth, however, is that clutter is a major obstacle to daily *chi* flow. I've seen the proof of this time and time again. Clutter makes it difficult for the life force to flow freely, and when *chi* doesn't flow freely, pets (and people) don't have access to the energy that will sustain them, invigorate them, and help heal them. Most of the pet owners I meet simply don't realize the impact that cluttered, cramped, or poorly ventilated spaces can have on their pets' quality of life—and their own.

Eventually, though, as in Carol's case, the results persuade people that removing clutter must have *something* to do with improving their pets' health. Even after they see the positive results in their own world, though, many pet owners remain a little puzzled about *chi*. What is it, exactly? That's a fair question—and a difficult one to answer. Western science has yet to measure or quantify *chi* in the way that it has measured or quantified, say, brain waves. Yet *chi* exists all the same.

Over the years, I've developed a number of answers for the people who ask me, "What is *chi*?" Some of them appear below.

***Chi* Is an Invisible Life Force**

The shortest, and probably best, answer to the question "What is *chi*?" is that it is an invisible life force that sustains and supports all beings, and that changes in intensity and effect according to the environment and the being it encounters.

Chi is not something you can measure with a machine. Even so, it is definitely something you can feel and access at any moment. Sit up straight and take a nice, deep breath through your nose, without opening your mouth, and you'll feel what I mean.

***Chi* Is Vital Energy**

Any number of authorities, including Zhuangzi, have described *chi* as *vital energy*: energy that makes activity, and life itself, possible. This energy can be managed by breathing, mental focus, and other disciplines. Attempts to label *chi* with such narrow tags as “life-breath” or “bio-energy” fall short, however, because an individual organism's *chi* can, if properly sustained, extend beyond that organism and into the universe at large. By the same token, an individual organism's *chi* can be degraded (as you have seen) by environmental influences and other factors.

***Chi* Is Metabolic Flow**

Traditional Chinese Medicine holds that the body has natural patterns of metabolic energy—*chi*—that flow in predictable channels. In English, these patterns are called *meridians*. Many illnesses are the result of disruptions, imbalances, or blockages of *chi* in the body; Eastern medical practice emphasizes the restoration of healthy, balanced *chi* flow through these channels by means of changes in the environment, herbal medicines, special diets, massage, acupuncture, acupressure, and other therapies. (Acupuncture uses needles to treat disorders, whereas acupressure uses pressure points.)

The meridians on your pet's body are presented in the figures on the next few pages; the dotted lines represent the meridians. In this case, a dog is used for demonstration.

The meridians govern the highway of organ and circulatory networks within the body; this matrix helps regulate the flow of *chi* throughout the body. Trained practitioners can gain access to the internal circulation of *chi* (and blood) by manipulating various points on these meridians, thus stimulating the release of hormone-like substances called *endorphins* that induce a euphoric state of well-being and help the



Pancreas/spleen meridian.



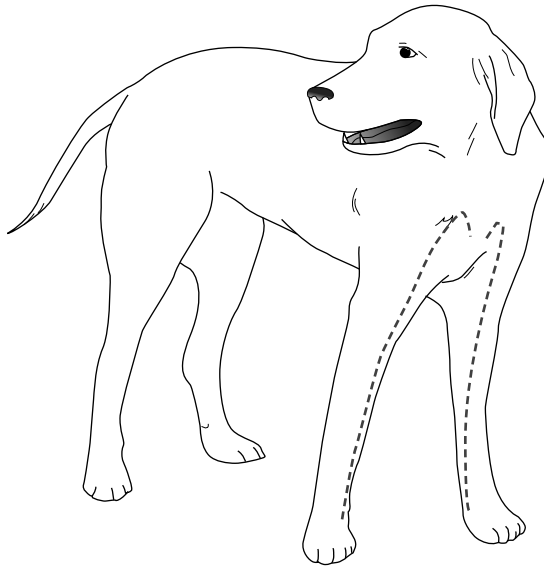
Stomach meridian.



Kidney meridian.



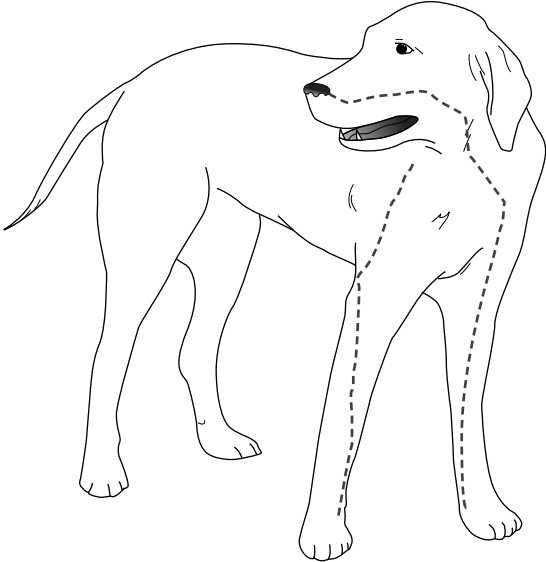
Liver meridian.



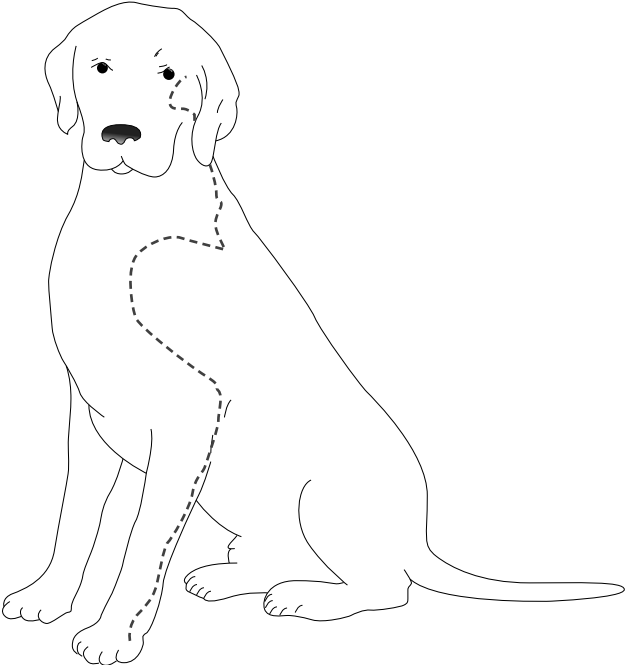
Lungs meridian.

body to cope with discomfort or pain. In fact, some disease states can be detected clinically in animals by stimulating a particular meridian.

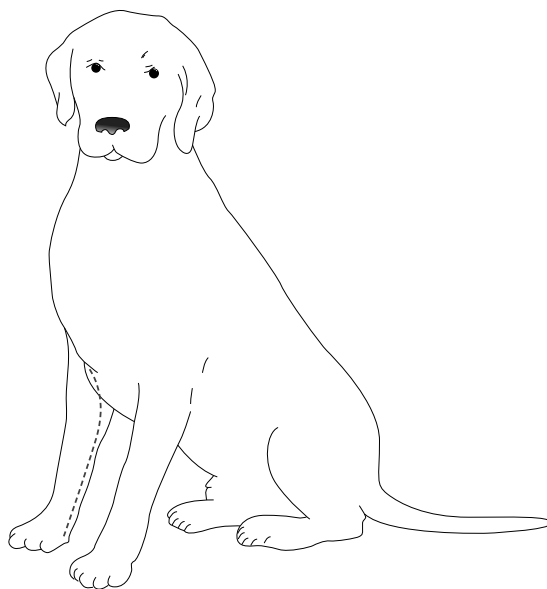
In Western medicine's present state of knowledge, much of the "how" behind the use of meridians in acupuncture and acupressure remains a mystery, but we know that they can be used to adjust the balancing functions of the body and thus bring them closer to their optimal levels of functioning.



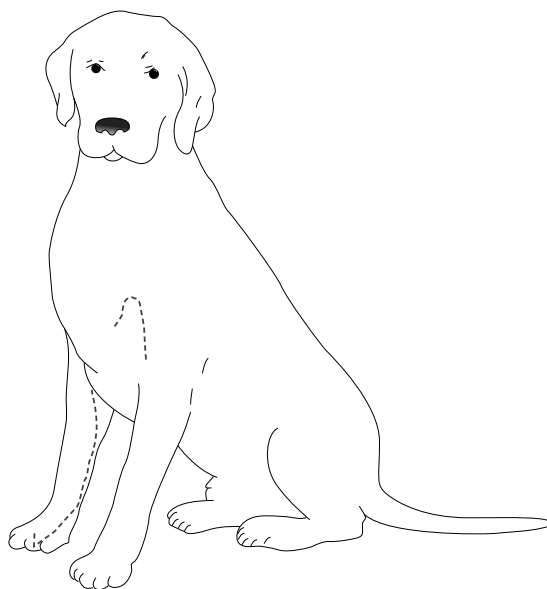
Large intestine meridian.



Small intestine meridian.

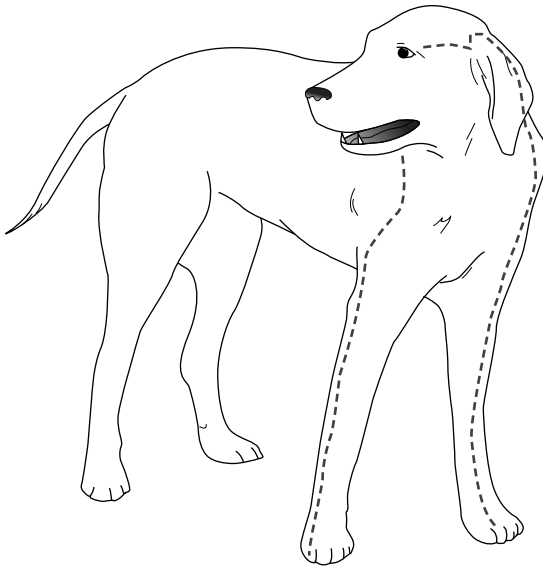


Heart meridian.

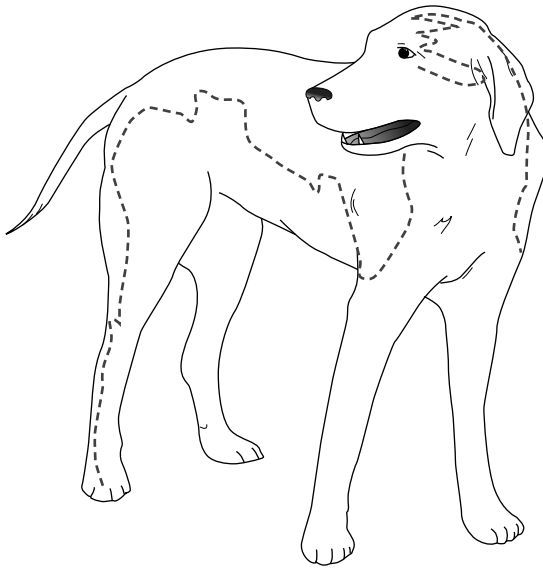


Pericardium meridian. (This is the protector of the heart.)

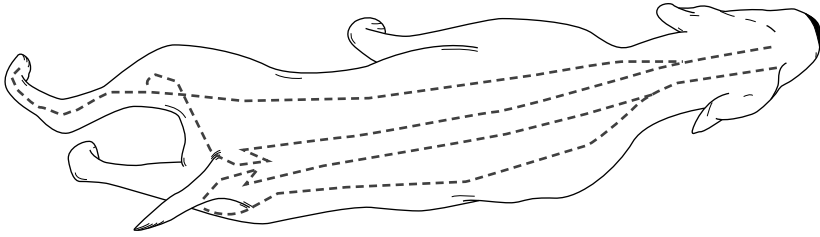
Head to Tail Wellness



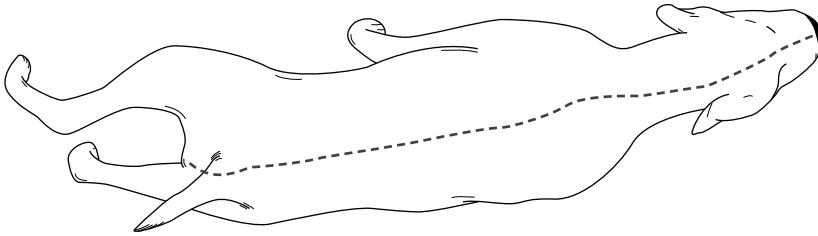
Triple heater meridian. (This is where the chest, abdomen, and pelvis meet. This area regulates metabolism and other bodily fluids and their flow throughout the body.)



Gallbladder meridian.



Urinary bladder meridian.



Governing vessel meridian. (This meridian runs along the topline of the animal.)



Conception vessel meridian. (This meridian runs along the bottom line of the animal.)

When you use *chi* flow to help animals, you are opening up these channels, which are located all over the body. Often, the reason your pet has a certain ailment is that a certain channel has a problem. And your pet's body, like yours, does a very good job of blocking out areas that are problematic—which sometimes intensifies the problem. The body is simply trying to do what it can to address the blockage or imbalance, but sometimes it needs help in restoring the metabolic flow. If the body doesn't get that help, the result may be stagnation, which can lead

to anything from minor problems like aches and pains to major problems like arthritis or a tumor.

***Chi* Is What You Feel When You Interact Positively with Your Pet**

When you've had a long, difficult day at work and you come home and your cat rubs up against you to say hello, that pleasant sensation you feel is due, in part, to *chi* flow. In the Introduction to this book, I shared evidence with you that interactions with pets have a measurable positive effect on human health. I believe that this is due in large measure to the flow of *chi* that people experience when they interact with their pets.

***Chi* Is What Is in the Natural Environment That Inspires and Awakens You**

Let's do a little experiment. I would like you to imagine yourself, just for a moment, in a tiny, cramped, cluttered room where the air is stale and the surroundings are oppressive, chaotic, and stagnant. How do you feel?

Now I'd like you to imagine yourself as you open the door and step outside of that room. You pass through the doorway to find yourself in a big, beautiful garden filled with your favorite flowers or grasses. The weather is beautiful; it's a sunny day, and you feel warm and comfortable. You've got acres of beautiful space to walk around in.

When this sort of thing happens in real life, you feel so much better when you go outside, don't you? The difference in how you feel is due, at least in part, to the enhanced, unblocked *chi* flow in the garden, as compared with the restricted, stagnant levels of *chi* you encountered in that tiny, closed-off room. When you encounter something in the natural environment that inspires and awakens you and you suddenly feel better just by exposing yourself to that environment, the reason is very likely to be a better and larger flow of *chi*.

Maximizing *Chi* Flow

In the end, it really doesn't matter how I describe *chi*. What really matters is how you manage it. Managing *chi*, and maximizing its flow in

order to help and support animals, is a big part of my job. This is one of the basic principles I use to do that: **Normally, *chi* flows uninhibited—but *chi* can be made inhibited by blockages of various kinds.** As it encounters these blockages, the *chi* is always going to try to flow in the easiest direction. It's going to seek out the points of easiest passage through an organism or an environment. In this way, it's a lot like water.

If there's a large body of water—a river, say—and someone comes along and puts up a dam that obstructs that river, what's going to happen? Well, the water is blocked in one spot, and it's probably going to find a path around the blockage. The area that used to be nourished by the natural flow of that river is no longer going to be nourished by the water. Before too long, the pattern of life there is going to change dramatically. In order to restore the earlier pattern of growth in that area, you have to remove the dam and get the water flowing again through that area.

Chi acts the same way. If you have arthritis or an injury or some other problem, then that problem acts like a dam. There's a roadblock in the body, and the *chi* can no longer flow through that roadblock. As a result, the *chi* is going to go into other areas, probably areas that don't need the help as much as the area with the blockage. **When the bodies of humans or animals experience blockages, the *chi* is not being used as efficiently as possible.** If you know how to channel the *chi*, how to change the environment and the organism so that more of the *chi* reaches the area that was blocked, you're in a position to help the body make the most of *chi*'s healing power.

If *chi* is channeled in the right way, then you and your pet can enjoy years and years of good health. If you don't channel it in the right way, then you and your pet may well end up having health problems.

Feng Shui

The term *feng shui* (pronounced “fung shway”) literally translates as “wind-water”—two important vehicles of *chi* in Eastern medicine. *Chi* “rides the wind and scatters, but is retained when encountering water,” according to one ancient source.

Feng shui is one of those phrases that people may use a lot without taking the time to understand what they're really saying. If I asked a dozen average Americans what *feng shui* means, I suspect that half a



Quotes to Ponder

It is more important to know what sort of person has a disease than to know what sort of disease a person has.

—Hippocrates (460–377 B.C.)

No illness which can be treated by the diet should be treated by any other means.

—Moses Maimonides (1135–1204)

The art of healing comes from nature and not from the physician. Therefore, the physician must start from nature with an open mind.

—Paracelsus

dozen would not be able to answer, and the other six might say something about moving furniture around as part of some obscure religious practice. If one person out of the twelve mentioned anything about promoting the healthy flow of *chi*, I'd be very surprised. Some people even think *feng shui* is little more than a fashionable excuse for expensive home redesign projects.

Actually, *feng shui* is the art and science of enhancing *chi* flow by making changes in the physical environment—nothing more than that, and nothing less.

What does this mean to the health of your pet? Well, instead of simply focusing on the animal—the horse who's experiencing colic, for example—we're going to look at the environment in which that animal lives and ask ourselves how effectively *chi* is flowing through that environment. Of course, if you wanted to, you *could* spend a great deal of money, time, attention, and energy completely re-creating a space in order to maximize *chi* flow. In practice, however, you're going to find that some simple and inexpensive changes in the home environment can have dramatic, positive, and rapid effects on the health and well-being of pets and their owners.

Both animals and humans have access to a lot of healing energy. In fact, every living being has access to healing energy. The question is, how much of that energy can you absorb and make use of, and how effectively can you do that?

Personally, I think this is something most people know intuitively. You know you feel better when the cat rubs up against you. You know that the energy flow between you and your pet matters to both of you. And you know, on some level, that what's in your environment is going to affect both you and your pet. These are not outlandish or foreign principles. They're common sense.

In the following chapters, I'll help you put that kind of common sense to work on behalf of you and your pet in simple, practical ways.

But before we move on, I want to leave you with one final thought about *chi* as it relates to your pet's health. In all that follows, you're not going to focus on some isolated *portion* of your pet, and you're not going to focus on your pet *in isolation*. You're going to focus on everything and everyone that *interacts with* your pet, including, but not limited to, the pet's immediate environment and the pet's relationship with you.

Everything your pet interacts with affects her flow of *chi*. To promote that healthy *chi* flow, you're going to make a series of adaptations. As a result, you'll learn to place much more emphasis on relationships, processes, and the flow of energy between you and your pet than on "fixes" for specific, narrowly defined problems. In addition, the promotion of healthy *chi* flow will help both you and your pet to compensate for impurities, pollutants, and stressors that may arise in the environment you share.