



OPTIMUM CHOICES, LLC  
*Healthy choices for people and pets*

**HealthyLife.Net Radio Show**  
**Wendy's Animal Talk, Host Wendy Nan Rees**  
**Guest Russell Louie**

**Is Doggie Massage Just a Spa Thing?**  
**July 21, 2009, 1-2:00 PM PDT**

**Russell, has studied holistic health and spirituality for over 30 years and lived a holistic lifestyle for over 57 years. He specializes in integrating his scientific background with his knowledge of health, to holistically help both people and pets. His greatest talent is being able to cut through all the marketing hype using his scientific background to tell people what is truly holistic. Today, we will talk about a very special topic, Is Doggie Massage Just a Spa Thing?**

**So, Russell, is doggie massage just a luxury people use to pamper their dogs?**

You are right, Wendy, that is what most people think. Some of the comments we get while massaging at dog shows go something like this, "My dog is spoiled but he is not THAT spoiled." While it is true many people do assume massage is a silly idea for dogs and "over the top" luxury item (so to speak) for spoiled dogs by people who cater to their "furry children", it really is not. As a matter of fact, there are scientific and biological reasons why dogs need massage MORE than people.

**Oh, this I've got to hear. Please share with my listeners some reasons why dogs need massage.**

I am sure you understand the difference between a back rub by your spouse or significant other, and a true neuromuscular, deep tissue massage by a Certified Massage Therapists? Just as with human massage, canine massage can have therapeutic benefits for dogs, particularly if it is done by a professional who has extensive training in canine massage.

## **OK, give me one biological reason why dogs need massage as much as people do.**

One biological reason dogs need massage is that we have altered their structure through centuries of breeding. Since dogs are no longer built like wolves, they no longer have optimal structure for good movement. Their structure has been further compromised during the last few decades due to small show rings that favor dogs with shorter strides, leading them to win (and be bred) rather than the dogs with longer strides and better structure. This altered structure leads to fewer muscles, as well as muscles that don't function optimally. As the dog ages, the joints break down, since the joints take more pounding than they were designed for. While massage won't correct these structural problems, it can help the muscles function better, thus reducing muscle soreness and joint damage. Since most dogs have less than optimal structure, almost all dogs can benefit from professional massage. Even mixed breed dogs have structural issues, since they are a mixture of purebreds with this same problem.

## **Wow, I never thought of that. Can you give me another scientific reason why dogs need massage as much as people do?**

Dogs that are professional athletes, such as dogs competing in agility trials, can be susceptible to injuries and problems just like human athletes. Agility dogs perform actions that are not entirely natural to their physiology, such as the twisting and shoulder action required when going through the weave poles. And their joints take a pounding when performing jumps as well as coming down steep ramps, such as the A-frame or dog walk obstacles. Just as human athletes have learned the benefit of professional massage in both preventing and treating injuries, informed dog owners have learned to provide regular professional massage for their doggie athletes.

## **What if I do not have a sport or agility dog?**

Say you go on a long hike on the weekend after working at a desk all week. You get sore or even injured muscles from what we call the "weekend athlete syndrome." The same thing can happen if you take your dog with you hiking. Dogs are just as susceptible to the "weekend athlete syndrome" as people. A hard play session at the doggie daycare or dog park could also result in injury or soreness if your dog is not accustomed to that level of activity on a regular basis. You may not know that your dog is experiencing pain from these activities, since pack animals instinctively hide their pain to avoid being thrown out of the pack. Your dog may not want to show any weakness in order to please you.

## **What if I have an inactive dog?**

If your dog is inactive due to illness, injury or surgery, massage can help during the rehabilitation period in returning to normal function. It may speed up the recovery process and help prevent lingering problems. As the benefits of canine massage and other modalities are becoming more widely known, it is now common to find facilities in large cities offering rehabilitative services for dogs including swimming, underwater treadmills, physical therapy and massage therapy.

## **Do the same massage benefits apply if I have a geriatric dog?**

If your dog is becoming elderly, massage can be particularly beneficial. Unless a dog is very active, such as competing in agility most of its life or doing herding, its muscles tend to get stiff beginning in middle age and progressing with each year. A trained canine massage provider can almost tell a dog's age by the stiffness of its muscles. In old age, the muscles also begin to atrophy. Older dogs are often also arthritic, with the pain discouraging exercise. The reduced activity leads to further stiffness and pain, which reduces activity even more, in a vicious cycle. Therefore, massage can be especially beneficial for middle-aged and elderly dogs in reducing pain levels, improving muscle condition and increasing flexibility and range of motion. When the dog feels better, they can be more active, which helps counteract the progression of arthritis and stiffness.

## **Why would you want to take your dog to a professional rather than just doing massage yourself?**

Some owners decline professional massage, stating that "I massage my dog every day myself". While massaging your dog is wonderfully beneficial, your dog can receive even more benefit by going to a trained professional. You may get back rubs from your spouse but if you have any kind of muscle problems or injury, you probably realize that a professional massage therapist has the training to better assist you. (Also, your spouse may not want to spend a whole hour giving you a full-body treatment!) Professional canine massage providers likewise are trained in addressing specific issues that your dog may have, going beyond just a "feel good" massage session. They typically have several hundred hours of training, including education in anatomy, physiology, orthopedic pathology, gait and structure, as well as massage techniques. Even if you took a weekend course in doggie massage, that is not equivalent to the training that a professional provider receives and does not replace a professional massage session for your dog.

## **Can you give my listeners a list of benefits their dogs can experience?**

- 🐾 Reduce pain and soreness
- 🐾 Increase flexibility and range of motion
- 🐾 Enhance muscle tone
- 🐾 Promote recovery from injuries or surgery
- 🐾 Improve circulation
- 🐾 Improve gait and structure
- 🐾 Boost the immune system
- 🐾 Assist with the elimination of wastes and toxins
- 🐾 Aid healing of soft tissue injuries
- 🐾 Help release habitual "holding patterns" found in muscles
- 🐾 Increase the supply of blood and nutrients to the tissues
- 🐾 Promote healthy skin and coat
- 🐾 Encourage relaxation and decrease anxiety
- 🐾 Maintain wellness

Now massage is not an attempt to cure any of these symptom or diseases. We always recommend seeing a vet first, before seeing a canine massage provider for an injury.

**I think that is important to let our listeners know you always suggest they take their pet to a vet for proper veterinary diagnosis. But then they can also research holistic alternatives.**

Yes, professional massage has been very popular for years among horse owners and not because they are pampering their horse. It's because a horse that can't move, can't be ridden. Horse owners get massages for their horses because it helps their horses move and feel better. Dog show exhibitors have known for years the benefits of professional massage in helping their dog to feel, look and move better. You will usually find canine massage therapy booths at dog shows. Exhibitors get regular massages for their dogs, not to pamper them but to enable them to perform better in the ring and recover quicker from any injuries or problems. While your dog may not be a champion show dog and you probably don't ride your dog like a horse (unless it's an Irish Wolfhound), wouldn't you like your dog to feel and move better as well?

**Yes, of course.**

**You seem to have wealth of pet knowledge. How can we access more of your 57 years of holistic wisdom?**

One way is to go to our website, [www.OptimumChoices.com](http://www.OptimumChoices.com) and sign up for our free monthly [e-newsletters](#). We have written articles on such topics as, Is glucosamine the answer for arthritis? Healthy water for you and your pets and Whole Food Nutrition vs. Supplements. All past articles are archived online and one can search for a specific topic. If your listeners will check the box at the bottom of the subscription form, we'll send subscribers a free report entitled **What Pet Food Companies Don't Want You to Know**. This report contains 11-points some of which we covered today.

**What other holistic resources do you have that would be of interest my listeners?**

We have written a series of Holistic Choices [e-Books](#). Readers can take advantage of the latest holistic research we find and absorb the information in a small chunk rather than a 100+ page book. The first three titles that have been published are:

- *Save Your Dog or Cat*
- *Secrets of Longevity (for people )*
- *How to become a canine massage provider*

**Tell me more about your dog massage e-Book.**

My wife, Margaret, wrote this e-Book. She writes about the ins and outs of pursuing a career in dog massage including training and certification requirements, legal considerations, schools

offering training, finding your personal style of practice, obstacles to building a practice and marketing tips.

## **How can I and my listeners get a copy?**

Go to our website [www.OptimumChoices.com](http://www.OptimumChoices.com) and click on the [e-Books] button in the left column on our home page. As a special offer, I will give your listeners one e-Book of their choice *free* with a purchase of any BioPreparation for pets or BioSuperfood for people product. Just have them say, “**Wendy sent me**” and ask for the *free* e-Book title of their choice with any product purchase in the Special Instructions box of our shopping cart.

**We are bombarded with all kinds of marketing for various pet supplements, each touting to be the best. Come back, on August 18, when I will ask Russell to talk about his upcoming e-Book—*Not Another Supplement?: New Holistic Paradigms!* He will discuss why giving supplements to your pet is NOT holistic, can have side effects and cause further imbalances in their body.**

For more information on Optimum Choices and holistic options for your pet, go to Russell’s website at [www.OptimumChoices.com](http://www.OptimumChoices.com). You can call toll-free 866-305-2306 or e-mail them at [info@OptimumChoices.com](mailto:info@OptimumChoices.com).