

By Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis

*Combining veterinary care with this gentle therapy can help heal these dogs, both physically and emotionally.*



# ACUPRESSURE-MASSAGE FOR PUPPY MILL SURVIVORS

Pet shop puppies are adorable. Your heart melts and you have to go inside to see them. The sales clerk assures you the pups are pedigreed and from a reputable breeder. You want to believe her, but you've heard that pet shop puppies often have health and behavioral issues.

Sadly, puppies from pet stores are most likely the product of puppy mills, also referred to as commercial breeders. There are over 14,000 of these facilities in North America, and this doesn't even count "backyard breeders".

Unfortunately, the profit motives of these commercial operators lead to miserable conditions for breeding dogs and severe health and socialization problems for the puppies. Breeding females are kept in small, filthy cages. The dams are malnourished, receive little or no veterinary care, and are bred continuously. When their reproductive years are over, they are killed. It's a life of pure misery.

The puppies are taken from the dams at five or six weeks of age and shipped to pet stores. The International Humane Society estimates that over 50% of the puppies die before reaching a store. Unsuspecting buyers assume they are getting a "quality" dog, but the truth is, they're paying a premium price for a puppy that will probably have or develop congenital or hereditary conditions. Other common health issues these animals experience include musculoskeletal disorders, blood problems, respiratory conditions, kidney disease, epilepsy, and a host of other illnesses and infirmities.

Governmental agricultural departments are supposed to be the watchdogs of commercial breeding facilities, but they have lax standards and not enough people to monitor the huge number of puppy mills. However, many non-profit animal welfare organizations are trying their best to close down puppy mills and commercial breeders, even though their resources are limited.

## CARING FOR A PUPPY MILL RESCUE

If you have adopted a pup or breeding dog rescued from a puppy mill or commercial breeder, what's the best way to care for her? How can you make life as healthy and loving as possible for your new friend? An integrative approach that combines conventional veterinary care with alternative therapies is the best way to help a breeding dog recover from the horrific conditions she has endured, or help a puppy learn to enjoy being a household companion.

- ① **Veterinary care.** All dogs rescued from these facilities must first receive immediate and ongoing medical attention. Most mill dogs are in poor condition and need extensive care. Though they may be extremely fearful because they have no experience of positive contact with humans, veterinary assessment and care are essential.
- ② **Plenty of TLC and gentle human touch.** You need to get the dog used to being touched and stroked in a loving, positive, non-threatening manner. Be patient and take it slow and steady – it will take time for him to adjust.
- ③ **Acupressure-massage.** This complementary therapy has proven over thousands of years to be effective in resolving

## DEFINITION OF A PUPPY MILL

*The term “puppy mill” or “commercial breeder” generally refers to a high volume, substandard dog breeding operation that sells purebred or mixed breed dogs directly or indirectly to unsuspecting buyers. Some of the characteristics common to these facilities are:*

- Substandard health and/or environmental issues
- Substandard animal care, treatment and/or socialization
- Substandard breeding practices that lead to genetic defects or hereditary disorders
- Erroneous or falsified certificates of registration, pedigrees and/or genetic background

–No Puppy Mills Canada, [nopupppymillscanada.ca](http://nopupppymillscanada.ca)

# A racing greyhound spends 20 hours a day in a cage



A greyhound at Tucson Greyhound Park.  
Photograph by Pima County Animal Care Center, c. 2011



Excel and Paige of MT

Which do you think he'd prefer?

**GREY2K USA**  
WORLDWIDE 

Help end dog racing at [grey2kusa.org](http://grey2kusa.org)





# ACUPRESSURE- MASSAGE SESSION - HOW TO DO IT

- To begin, use the flat portion on the heel of one hand to gently trace the Bladder meridian shown in Figure 1. By doing this, you are introducing the dog to intentional touch in a non-invasive manner. The Bladder median is located just to the side of the dog's midline. It begins at the inner canthus (corner) of the dog's eye, although we suggest you begin to trace the meridian from the top of his head for the sake of ease and comfort. Your opposite hand can rest comfortably somewhere on his body.
- Slowly and gently stroke from head to hind paw, tracing the meridian three times on each side of the dog. Use light pressure, but make sure it's firm enough that he is aware of your caring intent.
- After you have completed tracing the Bladder meridian segment, the dog is usually relaxed and will be open to more specific acupressure point work. *Li 4*, *St 36* and *Bai Hui* are three acupressure points that when stimulated are known to offer dogs a general balancing of energy and a sense of well-being (Figure 2). There are two basic techniques for stimulating acupoints:

**Thumb technique** – Gently place the soft tip of your thumb on the acupoint and count slowly to 20 slowly, then move to the next point. This technique works best on larger dogs and on a medium-sized dog's trunk and neck.

**Two-finger technique** – Place your middle finger on top of your index finger to create a little tent. Lightly put the soft tip of your index finger on the acupoint and count slowly to 20. This technique is good for small dogs and for the lower extremities on medium-sized to large dogs.



Figure 1

## BLADDER MERIDIAN

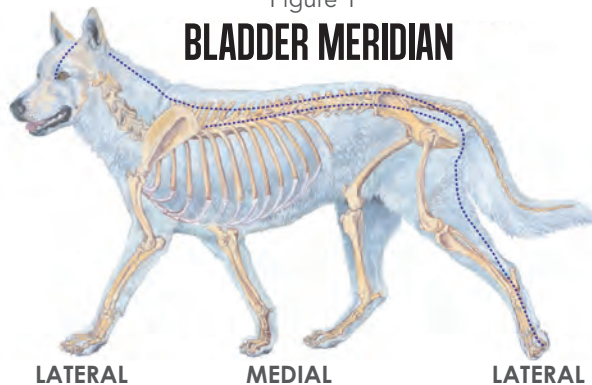
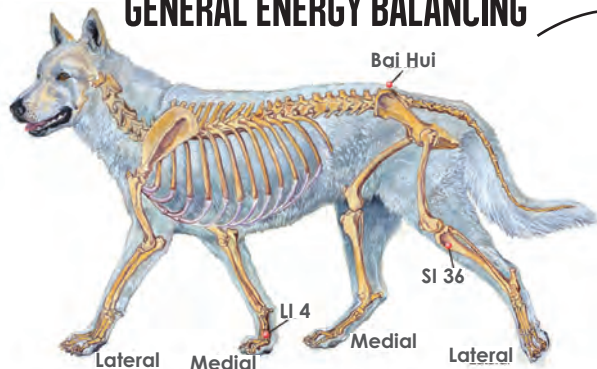


Figure 2

## GENERAL ENERGY BALANCING



Points	Location
LI 4	Between the 1st (dewclaw) and 2nd metacarpal bones, on the medial side of the 2nd metacarpal.
SI 36	Located just lateral to the fibial crest on the lateral aspect of the hind leg.
Bai Hui	Located at the lumbosacral space on the dorsal midline.

health and behavioral issues in animals. Once your puppy mill survivor has become comfortably receptive to touch, he can be given an acupressure-massage session (see left).

## BENEFITS OF ACUPRESSURE- MASSAGE

Acupressure-massage is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The intent of an acupressure-massage session is to balance the flow of energy throughout the dog's body. When energy is flowing harmoniously, the dog's body and psyche can function optimally. In Chinese medicine, when a dog's internal organs are functioning properly, his entire body is receiving the nourishment necessary to be healthy and happy, both mentally and physically.

Specific acupressure points located on the dog's body are known to enhance the flow of energy to provide general balancing. There are also acupressure points that address specific health issues, but this approach would require an assessment of the individual dog and the issues he's presenting with.

The acupressure-massage session included with this article can offer your mill survivor a sense of well-being. And that's an excellent way to start you and your rescue on a shared journey of creating a healthy, loving bond. 