

Pets & Prozac

BY LEE EAST

Prozac to boost his level of serotonin; the drug seems to have reduced the attacks.

Then was the dog who chased his tail—and not just occasionally, like many dogs, but up to five hours a day. When he wasn't chasing his tail, he was clearly thinking about it, says Vlahos. "He had an enemy, and this enemy was attached to his own body, and he had to chase it." The dog was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder.

Many dogs are prescribed drugs with the same active ingredient as Prozac. "The only thing different made it taste like beef," says Vlahos. "The only thing different with the dog version is the dosage size and that they've

hen writer James Vlahos first started looking into a story about people who gave their pets psychiatric drugs, he thought the idea itself was pretty crazy. "We're giving drugs to pets?" he says he asked himself. "What has America come to? I approached it pretty cynically." But he changed his mind while working on his article, "Pill-Popping Pets: Dogs, Cats and Mood-Altering Drugs," which appears in *The New York Times*.

"What I hadn't really thought about was the concept of a pet being genuinely mentally ill," he says. "I just hadn't given that much thought to the mind of a cat

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Here we have Boris. He is practicing for those dog days to come.



arrives!



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But drug companies are paying lots of attention to Fido's or Felix's mental states. For the first time, drug companies have sold more drugs for pets than for farm animals. One market research firm Vlahos cites in his article estimates that Americans spent at least \$15 million for behavior-modification drugs for their pets in a year.

Vlahos says it's all part of an American trend to humanize pets. He says pet owners think to themselves: "I feel a lot better now that I'm taking Elavil—I wonder if my dog would as well." That humanization, writes Vlahos, "has pharmaceutical companies salivating like Pavlov's dogs."

In researching his article, Vlahos came across a number of animals whose behaviors were best explained by using models of human mental illness and who responded to drug treatment.

There was Booboo the cat, who inexplicably began attacking his owner, Doug. Every once in a while, the cat would get all glassy-eyed and lunge at Doug in attacks severe enough to send the man to the hospital several times for stitches. Vets theorized that the cat had a deficiency of serotonin, a neurotransmitter in the brain that helps provide a feeling of well-being and pleasure. The vets thought each attack gave Booboo a rush of excitement and also a serotonin boost that made him feel better. Booboo was prescribed

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an alternative?

Reiki for Pets

Reiki is an energy healing technique that originated in Japan. It is a holistic form of energy healing meaning it treats the whole being. It assists in allowing muscles to relax and increases blood flow to treated areas, which in turn quickens the healing process after surgery, injury, or abuse. Although it was historically utilized with people, many now use it as a holistic healing system for animals and often do so in collaboration with the animals owner and veterinarian. It has been used on dogs, cats, birds, horses and more for many years now with excellent results.

Reiki is a phenomenal technique when working with healing animals for many reasons. It is a gentle, non-invasive, painless and stress free technique. Reiki energy facilitates physical, emotional and cognitive healing. It is one of the few therapies in the universe that brings no harm to anything.

Animals tend to enjoy Reiki therapy. It is a vibrational frequency they can sense and often times seek, as it is nurturing and soothing. The healing can be done either with the Reiki practitioners hands on the animal or from a distance. For high anxiety animals Reiki can facilitate relaxation and stress reduction and over a period of time can significantly reduce the anxiety.

Overall Reiki for animals can accelerate healing after surgery or illness and it is a good compliment to conventional therapy. It is fulfilling to see animals progress and their owners receive so much joy, it truly benefits both the animal and their owners.

— Donna Martuge, C.F.M.W.