In 1996, the AVMA revised its guidelines for alternative and complementary veterinary medicine. The guidelines are quoted below:

Preamble

Veterinary medicine, like all professions, is undergoing changes with increasing rapidity. Additional modalities of diagnosing and therapy are emerging in veterinary and human medicine. These guidelines reflect the current status of the role of these emerging modalities within the parameters of veterinary medicine for use in providing a comprehensive approach to the health care of nonhuman animals.

Use of these modalities is considered to constitute the practice of veterinary medicine. Any exceptions will be indicated in the following guidelines. Such modalities should be offered in the context of a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship. It is recommended that appropriate client consent be obtained. Educational programs are available for many of the modalities. It is incumbent upon veterinarians to pursue education in their proper use.

It should be borne in mind that because the emergence and development of these modalities is a dynamic process, as time passes, the following information may need to be modified.

Veterinary Acupuncture and Acutherapy

Veterinary acupuncture and acutherapy involve the examination and stimulation of specific points on the body of nonhuman animals by use of acupuncture needles, moxibustion, injections, low-level lasers, magnets, and a variety of other techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of numerous conditions in animals.

Veterinary acupuncture and acutherapy are now considered an integral part of veterinary medicine. These techniques should be regarded as surgical and/or medical procedures under state veterinary practice acts. It is recommended that educational programs be undertaken by veterinarians before they are considered competent to practice veterinary acupuncture.

Veterinary Chiropractic

Veterinary chiropractic is the examination, diagnosis, and treatment of nonhuman animals through manipulation and adjustments of specific joints and cranial sutures. The term "veterinary chiropractic" should not be interpreted to include dispensing medication, performing surgery, injecting medications, recommending supplements, or replacing traditional veterinary care.

While sufficient research exists documenting efficacy of chiropractic in
humans, research in veterinary chiropractic is limited. Sufficient clinical and anecdotal evidence exists to indicate that veterinary chiropractic can be beneficial. It is recommended that further research be conducted in veterinary chiropractic to evaluate efficacy, indications, and limitations. The assurance of education in veterinary chiropractic is central to the ability of the veterinary profession to provide this service.

Veterinary chiropractic should be performed by licensed veterinarians; however, at this time, some areas of the country do not have an adequate supply of veterinarians educated in veterinary chiropractic. Therefore, it is recommended that, where the state's practice acts permit, licensed chiropractors educated in veterinary chiropractic be allowed to practice this modality under the supervision of, or referral by, a licensed veterinarian who is providing concurrent care.

Veterinary Physical Therapy

Veterinary physical therapy is the use of noninvasive techniques, excluding veterinary chiropractic, for the rehabilitation of injuries in nonhuman animals. Veterinary physical therapy performed by nonveterinarians should be limited to the use of stretching; massage therapy; stimulation by use of a) low-level lasers b) electrical sources, c) magnetic fields, and d) ultrasound; rehabilitative exercises, hydrotherapy; and applications of heat and cold.

Veterinary physical therapy should be performed by a licensed veterinarian or, where in accordance with state practice acts, by 1/ a licensed, certified, or registered veterinary or animal health technician educated in veterinary physical therapy or 2) a licensed physical therapist educated in nonhuman animal anatomy and physiology. Veterinary physical therapy performed by a nonveterinarian should be performed under the supervision of, or referral by, a licensed veterinarian who is providing concurrent care.

Massage Therapy

Massage therapy is a technique in which the person uses only their hands and body to massage soft tissues. Massage therapy on nonhuman animals should be performed by a licensed veterinarian with education in massage therapy or, where in accordance with state veterinary practice acts, by a graduate of an accredited massage school who has been educated in nonhuman animal massage therapy. When performed by a nonveterinarian, massage therapy should be performed under the supervision of, or referral by, a licensed veterinarian who is providing concurrent care.

Veterinary Homeopathy

Veterinary homeopathy is a medical discipline in which conditions in
nonhuman animals are treated by administration of substances that are capable of producing clinical signs in healthy animals similar to those of the animal to be treated. These substances are used therapeutically in minute doses.

Research in veterinary homeopathy is limited. Clinical and anecdotal evidence exists to indicate that veterinary homeopathy may be beneficial. It is recommended that further research be conducted in veterinary homeopathy to evaluate efficacy, indications and limitations.

Since some of these substances may be toxic when used at inappropriate doses, it is imperative that veterinary homeopathy be practiced only by licensed veterinarians who have been educated in veterinary homeopathy.

Veterinary Botanical Medicine

Veterinary botanical medicine is the use of plants and plant derivatives as therapeutic agents. It is recommended that continued research and education be conducted. Since some of these botanicals may be toxic when used at inappropriate doses, it is imperative that veterinary botanical medicine be practiced only by licensed veterinarians who have been educated in veterinary botanical medicine. Communication on the use of these compounds within the context of a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship is important.

Nutraceutical Medicine

Nutraceutical medicine is the use of micronutrients, macronutrients, and other nutritional supplements as therapeutic agents.

Communication on the potential risks and benefits from the use of these compounds within the context of a valid veterinarian/client/patient relationship is important. Continued research and education on the use of nutraceuticals in veterinary medicine is advised.

Holistic Veterinary Medicine

Holistic veterinary medicine is a comprehensive approach to healthcare employing alternative and conventional diagnostic and therapeutic modalities.

In practice, holistic veterinary medicine incorporates, but is not limited, the principles of acupuncture and acutherapy, botanical medicine, chiropractic, homeopathy, massage therapy, nutraceuticals, and physical therapy as well as conventional medicine, surgery and dentistry. It is recommended that holistic veterinary medicine be practiced only by licensed veterinarians educated in the modalities employed.
The modalities comprising holistic veterinary medicine should be practiced according to the licensure and referral requirements concerning each modality.