

## PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: See [video and photos](#) of an acupuncture session for bunny Emma.

### **Acupuncture and massage relieve arthritis for zoo bunny** ***Non-invasive rehabilitation benefits animals at the zoo***

SEATTLE—*Acupuncture and massage for a rabbit?* A female rabbit named Emma at Woodland Park Zoo is experiencing the aches and pains of getting old, particularly arthritis in her knees. To help relieve the pain, she is under a comprehensive treatment program that includes acupuncture, massage, laser therapy, heat and joint supplements.



Well-cared-for house rabbits typically live eight to 12 years so, at 13 years old, Emma is geriatric. She receives laser therapy and massage, often with heat, twice a week and acupuncture two to four times a month at the zoo's veterinary hospital.

For decades, humans have benefited from the healing benefits of physical therapy. Today, rehabilitation techniques are emerging as a standard in best animal care programs in zoos around the country, and Woodland Park Zoo is at the forefront of providing this specialized care. In 2012, its senior veterinary technician, Harmony Frazier, became the first licensed veterinary technician in a zoo to become certified as an animal rehabilitation practitioner; she also is licensed as an animal massage therapist and trained as an animal osteoarthritis case manager.

Physical rehabilitation is used to help alleviate discomfort from an injury or surgical treatment, to improve circulation or range of motion and coordination, and to enhance life quality. "It is particularly beneficial for treating age-related changes, such as arthritis, and can help reduce the need or amount of medication required to keep the patient comfortable," said Frazier.

"Providing excellent care to more than 1,000 animal residents is a cornerstone of Woodland Park Zoo. As the field of exotic animal medicine continues to evolve, our goal is to continue to improve our husbandry and health care practices," said Dr. Darin Collins, the zoo's director of animal health. "The techniques of physical rehabilitation are non-invasive. Used in conjunction with traditional veterinary medicine, physical rehab provides additional medical care options to improve the recovery of patients with both chronic and acute conditions."

Therapeutic laser, hydrotherapy, stretching and massage, and exercise for strength and flexibility for the prevention and treatment of osteoarthritis are among several techniques being incorporated into the animal health program at the zoo.

Treating animal patients can be challenging for veterinarians because they can't talk. "Unlike human patients, our animal patients can't tell us where it hurts or describe the severity of the pain. However, there are telltale signs they feel better after their rehab sessions simply by the way they move or the look in their eyes. Many look more alert, their faces appear brighter, they have a hop in their skip, you name it. They seem more engaged in life," said Frazier.

Other animals currently undergoing physical rehab at the zoo are: two elderly, male penguins receiving laser therapy and massage for arthritis in their feet or knees; a geriatric, male emu (ostrich-like bird) receiving laser therapy for inflammation and pain in his back and massage to help range of motion; and a middle-age, male gorilla showing signs of slower mobility and reduced range of motion in knees and ankles being trained for laser treatments to his knees and stretching and weight shifting exercises to strengthen the muscles around his knees.

A local veterinarian, Dr. Darlene DeGhetto, volunteers her services to perform acupuncture sessions on Emma at the zoo. "We're so grateful to Dr. DeGhetto for donating her expertise, time and services to help Emma who has brought joy to tens of thousands of kids who visit

our Family Farm,” said Frazier. “It’s very obvious that Emma enjoys her rehab and acupuncture sessions and is benefiting from the techniques. She’s completely relaxed during the sessions and, immediately afterwards, she’s more engaged. The best outcome is that she can hop again!” added Frazier.

When Emma isn’t at her rehab sessions, she can be seen in the zoo’s [Family Farm](#).

Zoo fall/winter hours: 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. daily. For more information and how to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500.

Mobile app: Download the free Woodland Park Zoo mobile app for iPhone, iPad or Android from your app store. Use it to track your location on zoo grounds with GPS, discover daily zoo activities, take a mobile tour, and share the highlights of your visit with friends.

Free Wi-Fi is available for zoo guests, made possible through products donated by Cisco.

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