

Fascia, scar tissue and holding patterns
5/23/2016
Alice Reynolds

Scar tissue is the fibrous, connective tissue that forms after a strain as the body attempts to repair a torn muscle. This forms a haphazard pattern over the injury as the muscle tries to join the torn fibres together. Scar tissue is not the same as the tissue it replaces. It is tough and fibrous and not as flexible as muscle tissue. Therefore, scar tissue can reduce the muscle's flexibility and range of motion and increase the risk of re-strain, unless the scar tissue is broken down and remodeled.

Because the new, tough, fibrous type of connective tissue lays down after a muscle is torn after a strain, the body needs to repair itself. This can take from one week to three months, depending on the grade of strain. Because of the holding process, many dogs will be diagnosed as having arthritis. The dog seems old and lame overnight. This orthopedic condition has become a blanket term for lameness in dogs.

Once one area is injured, the dog will overcompensate. Often a dog will be treated for front right lameness, but the issue is actually on the back left.

A strain with scar tissue will also result in compensatory issues. One injury can result in a host of problems and become a cyclical issue. The detection of scar tissue lies in the art of muscle isolation and palpation.

Tissue is not mindless. Tissue is full of sensations, feelings and old memories. In fact fascia has more sensory nerves than any other tissue in the body. So, as you release fascia, you are waking up the body's sensations. Moving from the past to the present. Underneath most of our myofascial holding patterns is repressed emotional trauma. Emotional trauma is held in the soft tissue of the body.

By relaxing muscles and reducing tension, massage frees the pattern where the unconscious feeling is being held. Once the tension is gone, the unconscious mind loses its grasp and an emotion may emerge.

Holding patterns may be the result of a dog compensating for a past injury or they may be caused by past emotional trauma. If a dog experiences change, uncertainty, fear or pain, he will armor himself for protection. As part of the sympathetic nervous system, fight or flight mechanism, the muscle will brace in flexion, the breath is held, digestion stops, self-restrictive postures, such as slinking, crouching and cowering are implemented, reducing oxygenation, circulation and overall flexibility. Holding patterns affect the unconscious way muscles are held in emotional or physical situations. Therapeutic massage, such as Petmassage TM, helps to re-educate the muscle memory held in a dog's body, allowing for more freedom of movement and new choices in which to move, behave and respond.

Jean-Pierre Hourdebaigt, L.M.T. states in his book *Canine Massage A Complete Reference Manual*, "This stretching and softening will help release muscle tension, contractures, trigger points, stress points and spasms, eventually breaking down scar tissue."

Canine Massage Guild Case Study: Buddy the Sheltie

Buddy, an 8 year old Sheltie, lost his footing in an agility tunnel, flipped over and exited on his back. He was taken to a physiotherapist who recommended x-rays. No injury was found. After courses of Metacam and Loxicom had finished, he was no better.

A year later he was given a superficial palpation. Extensive scar tissue was found from strains along the muscles that run down each side of his spine and signs of a strain to one of his gluteal muscles. Three massage sessions within a three to five week period was recommended.

Buddy was running on walks and playing like a puppy after his first session. After the second session he was playing chase with the other family dogs and jumping on the sofa and bed. He now goes on long walks and happily trots along under his own steam.

This wonderful story of Buddy, his injury and scar tissue recovery, including a video taken after his first massage session, can be seen on the Canine Massage Guild website. Go to the blog Canine Massage – A case Study.

Sources

www.k9-massageguild.co.uk Canine Massage – A Case Study Catriona Dickson

www.caninemassageclinic.co.uk Canine Massage Clinic

www.caninemassage.co.uk

Canine Massage Therapy Centre Worcestershire UK

Biodynamic Breath and Trauma Release Institute

Satyarthi Peloquin – Working with Emotional Trauma in Bodywork Sessions

www.massagetherapy.com Cathy Ulrich Freedom for Feelings

www.sharonjogerst.com/caninemassage/sharonjogerst.htm

Therapeutic Bodywork and Energy Healing

Jean-Pierre Hourdebaigt, LMT Canine Massage A Complete Reference Manual