

Could Reiki Help Your Pet Feel Better – Naturally?

When your pet is hurting, anxious, or not themselves, you would do anything to help. What if comfort came without pills, side effects, or stress? Reiki is quietly making waves in the animal world, and changing how pet parents think about healing.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Reiki is a gentle, noninvasive Japanese energy therapy that can help calm and comfort your pet
- It may ease anxiety, reduce discomfort, aid recovery from illness, and bring peace during end-of-life care
- One approach allows your pet to “guide” the session
- Reiki works best as a complement to veterinary care, not a replacement
- You can practice simple at-home techniques to nurture a calmer, more connected bond with your pet

You have probably heard about Reiki for people, but did you know it can help pets too? This gentle, hands-on energy therapy can enrich your pet's wellness routine by bringing comfort to animals of all ages.¹

Reiki is a practice focused on connection, presence, and peace — something our pets seem to crave as much as we do. More pet parents are turning to Reiki not as a replacement for veterinary care, but as an added layer of comfort and healing that works alongside modern medicine.²

What Reiki Means for Your Pet

Reiki (pronounced ray-key) comes from two Japanese words — Rei, meaning "spirit," and Ki, meaning "energy."³ This modality is based on the idea that energy flows through all living things. When that energy is balanced and flowing smoothly, the body can relax — and relaxation lays the groundwork for healing, whether physical, emotional, or simply a return to feeling safe.^{4,5}

For pets, Reiki involves a practitioner entering a deeply calm, meditative state and placing their hands lightly on or just above the animal. The goal is not to massage muscles or manipulate joints, but to channel a sense of calm and balance. Many describe it as "holding space" for the animal — being present without expectation.^{6,7}

Because animals are sensitive to energy, they often respond quickly. A nervous dog may stretch out and sigh. A normally restless cat might curl up and stay still. Sometimes, the pet simply naps, which is a sign they feel secure enough to fully let go.^{8,9}

Instead of expecting pets to stay still or behave in a certain way, Reiki lets them guide the experience. This leads naturally into approaches that give them complete choice in how they engage, which is especially important for sensitive or anxious animals.

Because Reiki allows animals to guide the process, many practitioners use methods designed to honor this choice completely.

A Choice-Based Approach to Reiki

Reiki practitioners that work with animals often use a choice-based style that lets pets decide how, when, and if they want to engage. One well-known example is the Let Animals Lead® method, developed by Kathleen Prasad.¹⁰

Rooted in traditional Japanese Reiki, it treats Reiki as an animal-guided meditation practice, focusing on creating a calm, compassionate space and honoring the animal's preferences.¹¹ As a pet parent, that means:

- **Never forcing** them to stay or be touched
- **Allowing freedom** to sit, stand, or move where they wish
- **Respecting signals** when they walk away or take a break
- **Inviting participation** rather than insisting on it

This approach builds trust, making it particularly effective for shy, sensitive, or traumatized pets.¹² When pets feel safe and in control, the benefits of Reiki often reach deeper, helping them relax, recover, and reconnect.

How Can Reiki Help My Pet?

Reiki is not a cure for any disease or disorder; however, it can support your pet's well-being at any age. Here are the ways Reiki can help your pet:

- **Eases anxiety and stress** by helping your pet shift from a tense, reactive state into deep relaxation. Whether your pet is nervous about storms, fireworks, veterinary visits, or being left alone, a Reiki session can ease your pet's anxiety.¹³
- **Supports healing and recovery** by creating the conditions the body needs to repair itself. While it does not replace traditional medicines, it may help other treatments work more smoothly.^{14,15}
- **Brings end-of-life comfort** during their final days. Reiki can help release tension, soften pain, and create a peaceful space for your pet during the twilight stage of life.¹⁶
- **Strengthens your bond** through quiet, shared moments. For rescue pets or animals with a history of trauma, sitting together in a Reiki session can build trust and make them feel safe and loved.¹⁷

These benefits are not just anecdotal — some have also been observed in formal research.

What Does the Research Say?

Scientific research on Reiki in animals is still limited, but the results so far are encouraging. For example, a 2021 study on horses found that Reiki sessions significantly reduced heart rate and visible stress behaviors,¹⁸ while a 2008 study on laboratory rats showed lower heart rate and other stress markers, even in high-stress situations.¹⁹

In addition, many veterinarians report seeing animals become calmer, more comfortable, and sometimes recover more smoothly when Reiki is included in their care. Reiki can be used during stressful medical treatments for pets to help them feel calm and peaceful in that setting, which promotes better healing.

This not only aids comfort and healing for your pet, but it can also aid the veterinary team in providing better and more thorough care. Because Reiki is gentle, low-risk, and noninvasive, most experts agree it is worth considering as part of a broader wellness plan.^{20,21}

What to Expect in a Reiki Session (and How to Know It's Working)

A typical Reiki session lasts about 20 to 45 minutes, adjusted to your pet's comfort level and attention span. Working with a professional Reiki practitioner is a great way to start. Here is what usually happens:

1. **Set the scene** in a quiet, comfortable space where your pet feels safe. This could be at home, outdoors, or in the practitioner's studio.
2. **Let your pet take the lead** by allowing them to approach, keep some distance, or move freely.
3. **Gentle focus** from the practitioner, often using meditation or slow, calming breaths to help guide the energy.
4. **Watch for signs of relaxation** such as slower breathing, stretching, yawning, or even dozing off. Some pets may stay active but check in from time-to-time.
5. **End naturally** when your pet signals they are done, often by walking away or shifting their focus.

You know that your pet is benefitting from Reiki when you notice certain changes. Results can vary — some pets relax almost instantly, while others respond more gradually.

You might see calmer behavior in situations that once caused stress, more restful sleep and deeper relaxation, a better appetite or greater enthusiasm for play, and subtle mood shifts or signs of comfort that build over time.²²

Noticing these benefits may inspire you to support your pet between sessions, which brings us to an important question:

Can You Recreate Your Reiki-Inspired Experience?

While a certified Reiki practitioner brings valuable training and experience, you can still weave elements of the practice into your daily routine to help your pet feel calmer and more connected.²³ Simply:

- **Choose the right time** — Wait until your pet is naturally relaxed, such as after a walk, a satisfying meal, or a good play session. A calm starting point makes it easier for them to stay present and enjoy the moment.
- **Settle yourself first** by sitting comfortably near your pet and taking a few deep, calming breaths.
- **Let your pet decide** whether to approach you, stay nearby, or move freely.
- **Use gentle positions** like resting your hands over their shoulders, placing them on the belly or mid-back, or holding near the base of the tail.
- **Try emotional support positions** such as one hand between the shoulder blades with the other on the chest, or one hand on the head and the other on the chest.²⁴

The key is to remain relaxed yourself. Your calm state is part of what makes the experience effective. And if an in-person session is not possible, you can still explore remote Reiki with a trained practitioner.

Remote Reiki works on the idea that energy is not bound by physical distance. Virtual sessions can be especially helpful for shy pets, animals stressed by travel, or cats that prefer their own space.²⁵

The Last Word on Reiki for Pets

The reality is, Reiki is not magic, and it will not solve every problem. But it can create moments of deep calm, comfort, and connection.

Whether your pet is young and healthy, recovering from illness, or approaching the end-of-life, Reiki offers a way to slow down, breathe, and simply be together. And sometimes, that quiet connection is exactly what both you and your pet need most.

Sources and References

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