

Camel gets relief from arthritis with acupuncture

Brookfield (AP) – Traditional medicine wasn't working to relieve the arthritis in Jewel's front legs.

Brookfield Zoo chief veterinarian Tom Meehan said keepers had tried everything they could think of to help the aging Bactrian camel's condition. But in January 2003, a former colleague suggested another, less traditional approach: acupuncture.

The staff saw an improvement in Jewel's condition a few days after the first treatment.

"I hadn't seen this camel run for more than two years, she'd gotten so lame," said Mary Schollhamer, Jewel's chief keeper. "But when she saw me that morning, she ran all the way to the fence to greet me. I was so moved, I started to cry."

Dr. Barbara Royal said Tuesday that she treats the 1,600-pound animal every two or three weeks with the same needles that are used on humans.

"You have to be aware of 390 specific points on the body that you use in this treatment whether the patient is a human or an animal," Royal said. "Depending on what you are treating, you use 8 to 30 needles in different parts of the body."

Acupuncture has been used for thousands of years in many parts of Asia, where it's believed that pricking a patient with stainless steel needles in strategic places helps nerve and circulatory functions. Oriental medicine views disease as a physical expression of imbalances in the body. Acupuncture and other treatments are designed to restore such balances.