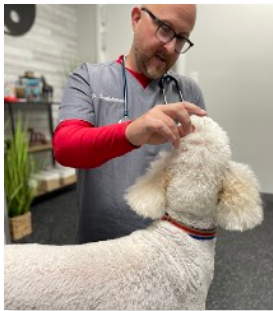




PAWSITIVE PRESS

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FIVE ELEMENT THEORY IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE VETERINARY MEDICINE

BY MICHAEL BARTHOLOMEW, DVM, MSTCVM

Five Element Theory is one of the foundational theories of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM) along with Yin-Yang Theory.

The first reference to the *Five Element Theory* originated around the time of the Zhou Dynasty which was around 1000-771 B.C. Originally, *Five Element Theory* was not known by this name but was referred to in multiple ways including the Five Abilities and The Six Seats of Government. The development of this theory marked a new, more scientific approach, to disease moving away from supernatural causes of illness to more deductive methods of diagnosing disease. It is interesting to note, that initially the *Five Element Theory* also had political connections as the philosophers of the time thought they could predict the line of rulers based on the element the ruler was associated with.

Each pet that we treat, has a strong association with a particular element. Dogs that tend to be joyous and move a lot — think Jack Russel Terriers—tend to be associated with what is known as the “Fire Element.” They are prone to behavior disorders, what we call Shen Disturbance, as the fire can burn out of control. German Shepherds are the classic “Wood-type personality.” When well-balanced, they are strong outspoken leaders within the pack. When imbalanced, they become aggressive and irritable.

So what are the Five Elements? The Five Elements are linked to the natural phenomena of Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood. Each one of these elements have distinct qualities that make them unique while sharing a close working relationship with the others. One of the qualities is a correlation of each element with a particular **season**.

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FIRE, EARTH,
METAL,
WATER,
WOOD

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Five Element Theory

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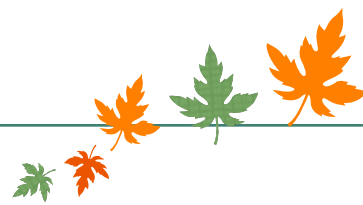
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...FIVE ELEMENT THEORY CONT...

Fire, for example, corresponds with summer, Earth corresponds to late summer, Wood corresponds to spring, Metal corresponds to autumn, and Water corresponds to winter.

Another quality is **movement** where Wood corresponds with expansion, Fire with upward movement, Earth with stability, Metal with contraction, and Water with downward movement. There are several other qualities which are assigned to the elements as laid out in the table below. As a practitioner, one of the most important associations are those of the elements and the **organs of the body**. For example, the Wood Element is associated with Liver and Gallbladder; Fire with Heart, Pericardium, Small Intestine, and Triple Heater; Earth with Spleen and Stomach; Metal with Lungs and Large Intestine; and Water with Bladder and Kidneys. One of the most important aspects of these elements, and subsequently organs, is that they share a close relationship in which there is a cycle of generation and support. Each organ in the cycle has a mutually supportive role (ie. the Wood Element supports the Fire Element which mimics natural the processes of wood adding fuel to the fire) and also a control cycle (ie. Metal controls the Wood Element—think of the axe chopping down the tree). In this fashion, the associated organs support and control each other within the body. When these cycles are out of balance, there is disease.

By utilizing these cycles, the practitioner can deduce where the imbalance is and work toward correcting it. The imbalances can develop in two ways. The first is known as the “insulting sequence” in which one element insults another causing disease. For example, when the Liver (Wood) insults the Lungs (Metal), it can cause difficulty breathing. When the Lungs (Metal) insult the Heart (Fire), circulation is impaired. The other cycle causing imbalance is the “over-acting” sequence. If the Liver (Wood) overacts on the Spleen (Earth), it can cause nausea and diarrhea. Other characteristics that assist a practitioner in diagnosing disease and imbalance are things like color, sound, and even the climate a pet is living in. If a German Shepherd who has been a strong leader who always takes charge and is an alpha in the house presents to the clinic with severe blowout diarrhea, the practitioner may deduce that there is an imbalance in the Wood Element. In this case the practitioner may deduce that the Liver is overacting on Spleen leading to the diarrhea. The practitioner will then use acupuncture points and herbs, not only to treat the Spleen (Earth Element) but also to focus on the Liver (Wood Element) in order to be successful therapeutically. This is just “the tip of the iceberg” when it comes to *Five Element Theory* but it highlights the importance of having a qualified TCVM practitioner assess and treat your pet.

ELEMENT/ QUALITY	Season	Direction	Color	Taste	Organ	Emotion	Sound
Wood	Spring	East	Green	Sour	Liver/ GallBladder	Anger	Shouting
Fire	Summer	South	Red	Bitter	Heart/Small Intestine	Joy	Laughing
Earth	Late Summer	Center	Yellow	Sweet	Spleen/ Stomach	Pensiveness	Singing
Metal	Autumn	West	White	Pungent	Lung/Large Intestine	Sadness	Crying
Water	Winter	North	Black	Salty	Kidneys/ Bladder	Fear	Groaning

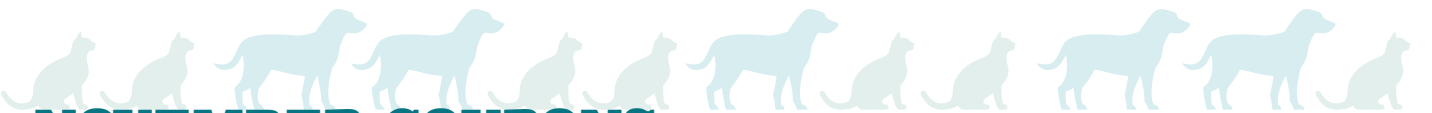
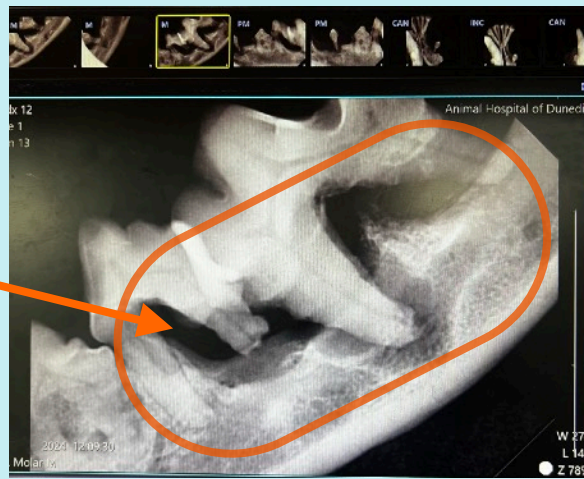


Tech Talk

Why Are Dental X-Rays Important?

BY KATIE & HANNAH, AHOD TECHNICIANS

While at the *Animal Hospital of Dunedin* for a dental cleaning all patients receive full mouth dental x-rays (radiographs) as part of our comprehensive dental procedure. The radiographs are to show the surgery team what is going on below the gumline and identify issues that we cannot see with just our eyes. In the x-ray presented, this sweet kitty came in for a routine dental but once we took our full-mouth dental radiographs we found a problem with the teeth. There was excessive bone loss around the two teeth (pictured right) caused by periodontal disease which is a bacterial infection that occurs when plaque and tartar build up on the teeth. Because we were able to see the issues on the radiograph, we were able to remove the infected teeth and now this kitty is happy, pain-free and able to continue to live his best life!



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