

Reiki in Veterinary Medicine

Claudia R Barbieri, DVM, MBA, a Veterinarian and Reiki master on how she has been opening doors to bridge science and holistic healing for animals in Brazil

I hold a degree in Veterinary Medicine from UFRGS, and a specialisation in Homeopathy from EGH-RS, both in Brazil. My clinical focus is holistic veterinary care for companion animals, particularly dogs and cats. I am a certified Usui/Holy Fire® III and Karuna Reiki Master, a Bach Foundation Registered Practitioner and a professional member of the International Centre for Reiki Training (ICRT) and the Centre for Reiki Research, where I volunteer as an Assistant Researcher. Passionate about integrative medicine, my current research explores Reiki as a complementary therapy in both veterinary and human healthcare.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in energy-based therapies as complementary to conventional medicine. Among them, Reiki has gained recognition for its role in supporting patient care in human healthcare facilities. Once seen as an alternative practice, Reiki is now integrated into hospitals across the world. In fact, a 2007 survey of over 800 hospitals revealed that 15% of the facilities offered Reiki therapy as part of their services (Baldwin, 2019). Today, more than 1,000 Reiki programs are active in U.S. hospitals (Fehrs, 2024). This evolution reflects a paradigm shift toward more holistic approaches to healing. Organisations such as the Centre for Reiki Research (CRR) are

now providing structured workshops on how to introduce, manage and sustain Reiki programs in medical settings (Hammerschlag, 2024). While conventional medicine primarily targets physical symptoms, Reiki addresses subtle energy imbalances that may contribute to disease, offering a broader perspective on health. From my point of view, this is an invaluable contribution to patient care.

My relationship with Reiki began in March 2021, following the loss of one of my beloved dogs to cancer. As a homeopathic veterinarian, I had cared for him with organic food, homeopathy and herbal medicine. He was so gentle and calm that we called him our 'good vibes dog'. Despite living a healthy lifestyle, he was diagnosed with cancer in late 2019. For a year, I supported him with holistic treatments until his peaceful passing.

His loss left me with questions: Why did this happen? What had I missed? What was the deeper lesson? In my search for answers, I discovered Reiki and soon trained in Usui/Holy Fire® III Reiki Levels I and II. Reiki helped me realize how profoundly our emotions, such as anxiety and anger can influence the health of both humans and their animal companions. »





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- 1 Reiki session in nature
- 2 Reiki session for a cat at Veterinary Hospital
- 3 Reiki session in a Pet Day Care facility

Later, during an Animal Reiki course, I understood that my grief had opened a new path. What began as loss became a journey of learning. Reiki, described by its founder Mikao Usui as “the art of inviting happiness”, revealed itself as a gentle yet powerful healing modality still largely unexplored in veterinary medicine.

I began offering Reiki to my other dog and to some patients, observing improvements in well being and vitality. However, when I shared these experiences with colleagues, many were uncertain about Reiki’s potential in veterinary practice.

Just as in human healthcare, Reiki offers a non-invasive, holistic approach for animals, addressing pain, illness, anxiety and trauma while supporting relaxation and healing. It can complement conventional treatments,

particularly in complex conditions such as cancer, autoimmune disease and chronic pain. Moreover, Reiki can benefit not only animal patients but also the veterinary team, who often face physical and emotional exhaustion.

Despite these promising observations, Reiki’s presence in veterinary medicine remains limited. Research is scarce, largely due to challenges in studying energy therapies in animals such as subjective outcomes, reliance on guardian observations and difficulty controlling variables. This lack of evidence makes it difficult for veterinary medicine, which demands scientific rigour, to formally adopt Reiki as a clinical tool.

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Motivated to bridge this gap, I designed and conducted my first scientific study on Reiki, published in the Journal of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (Summer 2025). This blinded, placebo-controlled trial included 54 dogs aged eight years and older. Over six weekly distant Reiki sessions, we assessed 11 health issues common in veterinary practice, including pain, digestive problems, anxiety, fear, mood and overall well being.

The most significant finding was Reiki’s effect on pain management: dogs receiving Reiki experienced clear and statistically

significant pain reduction compared to the control group. Caregivers also reported improvements in mood, social interaction and overall well being, although these results were not statistically conclusive.

One unexpected finding was the lack of measurable effects on anxiety. While many human studies demonstrate Reiki’s ability to ease anxiety, our trial did not replicate this effect in dogs. In my clinical experience, I often observe how pets mirror their guardians’ emotional states, including anxiety. This inspired me to refine future studies by incorporating standardised questionnaires for both dogs and humans, in order to explore not only individual responses but also the shared energetic bond within households.

My current research builds on this foundation, aiming to better understand how Reiki fosters balance, harmony and healing in the human-animal relationship. The goal is to provide stronger scientific evidence that can guide veterinarians in responsibly integrating Reiki into daily practice.

As more studies are conducted, I believe Reiki will increasingly be recognised as a valuable tool to improve treatment outcomes and to promote compassionate, patient-centred veterinary care. By embracing integrative and energy-based modalities, we honour our responsibility to improve the health and quality of life of animals in natural, holistic, effective and ecologically sustainable ways. ■

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