

Learning from Bovine Moxibustion

by Bunzo Takamatsu

We seem to be experiencing the second boom of acupuncture in America. Even cats and dogs are getting acupuncture, but of course, they get it from veterinary doctors. Just recently, I was very surprised to know that there is a large group of veterinarians who do acupuncture and their group is called I.V.A.S. (International Veterinary Acupuncture Association). Since there is no placebo effect on animals, acupuncture undoubtedly must be working. Veterinary acupuncture is nothing new. It has been practiced for as many thousands of years as human acupuncture. In old times it was more commonly done on cows and horses than cats

year soon afterward, Prime Minister Tanaka visited China to restore diplomatic relations between Japan and China. Acupuncture anesthesia became a big topic at the time, which also stimulated Dr. Hosaka's curiosity.

It was a small wonder that he tried acupuncture on cows, because he had already been using Chinese herbs on cows in his practice. Unfortunately, he was not too impressed with the results of his first acupuncture treatment on a cow, so when a friend told him an interesting story about moxibustion, he decided to try it out on the cows instead.



Moxa on cow (Photo from Mainichi Newspaper, Kurume branch)

and dogs. Now the situation is reversed, which makes Dr. Hosaka's practice even more exceptional.

Torashige Hosaka, D.V.M. (60 years old) has been doing moxibustion (not acupuncture) extensively on cows for around twenty years in Kyushu, Japan. Several things motivated him to do moxibustion on cows: the restoration of diplomatic relations with China; a very busy acupuncture clinic; and also a very busy noodle shop across the street.

It is a well known fact that in 1972, President Nixon visited China and caused the first acupuncture boom in America. In the same

This friend had some digestive problems and had been going to see an acupuncturist for some time. It happened that, after every session, which consisted mostly of moxibustion, he immediately felt better, got hungry, and rushed into the noodle shop across the street, which resulted in a dramatic increase in the business of the noodle shop. Seeing how moxibustion stimulated his friend's digestion and appetite, Dr. Hosaka decided to try moxibustion on all kinds of illnesses, from digestive problems, reproduction problems, musculo-skeletal problems to urinary problems. He found moxibustion effective for most problems

and often used it in combination with Western medicine.

The features of moxibustion are:

1. It is relatively easy to practice.
2. A license is not required.
3. It is cost-effective.
4. There are no side effects.
5. It produces instant results.

One dairy farmer, who was having great difficulty with his herd's infertility problems, found a cure in moxibustion and became a great fan of it. (See above photo.)

He summarized the effects of moxibustion, when it came to reproductive problems in cows, as follows:

1. It became easy to tell the time of estrus and hence easier to impregnate.
2. The cows became less susceptible to mastitis.
3. It eliminated the problem of parturient paresis.
4. There was much less incidence of retained placenta.

There is no doubt that moxibustion works, but there are still many things unknown about the mechanism of it. We can deduce what it does by studying many of the case histories available to us.

Dr. Hosaka summarizes the actions of moxibustion as follows:

1. Moxibustion normalizes the function of the autonomic nervous system. Mainly, it stimulates the para-sympathetic nervous system, promoting peristaltic motion in the intestines, contraction of the uterus, contraction of the bladder, etc.
2. Moxibustion stimulates the immune system. Its cauterizing action stimulates an immune response.
3. Moxibustion also promotes hormone secretion. Cows without estrus for over 100 days have estrus within a week after moxibustion. A 20% increase in milk production is common after moxibustion. A very interesting fact is that moxibustion seems to stimulate hormone secretions when they are too low and represses them when they are too high. This leads us into the next principle of moxibustion.
4. Moxibustion has a double adjustment function or autonomic adjustment function. For example, moxibustion for constipation makes stools softer and normalizes bowel movement, and for diarrhea it makes stools harder and normalizes bowel movement. It seems moxa has a homeostatic effect on the body, causing a perfect physiological balance.
5. Moxibustion makes the problems of the body more apparent. It makes an unclear condition more distinguishable and easier to handle.

I myself find #4, moxa's homeostatic property, the most interesting. This is the reason why moxibustion on cows works equally for all types of illnesses, using the same dose of moxa on the same points. In the case of humans it does not appear to be so simple. I still believe, though, that as far as moxibustion is concerned we don't have to be as meticulous as we do with acupuncture treatment strategies. I believe this is why the basic moxibustion points used by the Sawada school work so well for all kinds of problems and for all kinds of people.

Naturally, then, we would like to know the basic moxibustion points used by Dr. Hosaka on cows. There are nine of them. As I mentioned before, he uses these points for all kinds of problems. (Note: Acupuncture points for cows are notated with dashes, example BL-28-1. Acupuncture points for humans are notated with the pound sign, example GV#20.) (Fig. 1)

Tenpei (GV-6) is found between the spinous processes of the 13th thoracic vertebrae and the 1st lumbar vertebrae.

Gotanden (GV-5) is located between the spinous processes of the 1st and 2nd lumbar vertebrae.

Jinmon (GV-4-1) is located between the spinous processes of the 2nd and 3rd lumbar vertebrae.

Anjin (GV-4) is found between the spinous processes of the 3rd and 4th lumbar vertebrae.

Hyakue (GV-20B) is located between the spinous process of the 5th lumbar and the sacrum.

Kibi and Biki (BL-28-1) are about 8 cm. lateral to Hyakue. The left side is called Kibi and the right side is called Biki.

Bikon (GV-2) is found between the sacrum and the spinous process of the 1st tail vertebrae.

An extra point is in the depression directly superior to Tenpei.

(Numbering system of points is according to Veterinary Acupuncture by Schoen.)

Let us compare these points with the points on the human body. Tenpei (GV-6) must be Sekichu (GV#7). Gotanden (GV-5) is Meimon (GV#4). Anjin (GV-4) seems to be the sub-point of Meimon. Now, Hyakue (GV-20B) is a very interesting point. The name Hyakue, has two meanings. First, it is the point where one hundred meridians meet, and second, it is the highest point of Yang-ki. On a cow, Hyakue (GV-20B) is located on the sacrum, which corresponds on the human body to Yohkan (GV#3), the "Gate of Yang-ki". Hyakue (GV#20) on the human body is located on top of the head instead of on the sacrum as with a cow. (Maybe a cow thinks from the sacrum!) Kibi and Biki (BL-28-1) are Hohkoh (BL#48). Bikon (GV-2) looks like Yohyu (GV#2). These points seem to be very effective for infertility problems in humans as well. In the case of humans, I would use a few more points on the lower abdomen, which would be hard to do on cows.

Let's talk about the practical application. First, make moxa balls about the size of pingpong balls. Second, secure the head of the cow. Third, tie the tail to the leg so that the cow does not whip off the moxa balls

with its tail. Fourth, put miso (soy bean paste) on all the points. This has two purposes. One is to secure the moxa balls. The other is to avoid burns of the skin. I would suggest using aloe jelly. Now it is ready to go. It takes from 5 to 10 minutes for a moxa ball to burn. Be very careful about the fire!

I would like to discuss what I learned from moxibustion on cows. My practice has been very dependent on moxibustion, and reading about moxibustion on cows reassured me of its power. My wife is due with our 4th child now. Ever since I read about moxibustion on cows I have been doing moxibustion on my wife every day. I am sure her recovery from the labor will be nice and smooth. Another thing which impressed me is that, as far as health management is concerned, we are in the same situation as the cow.

We control the cow's life to be the way we want it. We manipulate the feed to make the meat taste better. We inject hormones to make the cow grow faster and fatter. We give antibiotics to prevent diseases and end up making the cow's resistance to disease become weaker and weaker. For example, a common problem like mastitis has historically been successfully treated by Chinese herbs and folk medicine. Nowadays it is treated solely by antibiotics. Naturally the bacteria acquires resistance and new antibiotics are required. This becomes a vicious cycle. It is no longer a joke that mastitis is harder to cure where there is the newest test equipment and technology. In spite of the higher cost, nothing has improved much when it comes to actual healing. Overdosage of hormones for reproductive problems can easily become a vicious cycle too. Many of the problems cows have now may have been caused by humans.

Is our situation much different from that of a cow's? Are we really in charge of our health? No matter how much our technology progresses, we should always keep one thing in mind. That is, as a rule and as much as we can, we should try to maintain good health for ourselves. Moxibustion, which can be done by anyone and is so effective, could be a very reliable means toward that goal.

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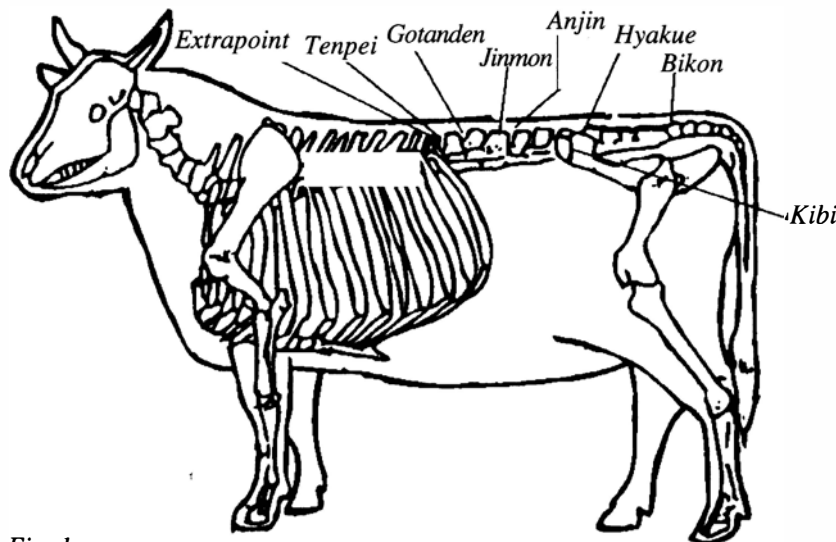


Fig. 1
Acupuncture points on cow