

Find out how you can use acupressure to help your kitten's development. Karen Bush explains all.

Balancing act

Young animals are supposed to be full of life, dashing around the house and tearing about the garden. These bouts of energy are, however, interspersed with frequent periods of deep sleep. Rest is as essential as exercise for the development of the bones, muscles and neurological connections.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) these two extremes that your kitten moves between are considered to be 'Yin' or 'Yang'; two opposing but complementary forces found in all things in the universe. Yin is, for example, passive, dark, feminine, and corresponds to the night, while Yang is the opposite — active, light, masculine and corresponds to the day. One cannot exist without the other and the two are usually in movement rather than

being static as one increases and the other decreases.

"The essential concept underlying TCM is that good health is based on achieving a dynamic balance between Yin and Yang — but with your kitten constantly bouncing from one extreme to the other, it's hard to understand how he can maintain his well-being," says animal acupressure practitioner Amy Snow.

"Their bodies have their own form of balance; there are times when they have to be very Yang, but they counter it by being very Yin.

"Giving your kitten an acupressure session called 'Gentle Pinches' will help support and enhance whatever is going on in your kitten's body at the time, as well as helping to create a very special bond. Acupressure is non-invasive, safe and animals tend to be especially attuned to it. This particular treatment is also very easy and simple, requiring no knowledge of either TCM or anatomy." ■

i Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis run the Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute and are the authors of 'Acu-Cat: A Guide to Feline Acupressure' (£7.99), see the *Your Cat* bookshop on page 22. For more details, visit www.animalacupressure.com. They are also offering a series of courses during August. Visit www.tilleyfarm.co.uk or tel. 01761 471182 for information.

* *Your Cat* has two copies of the book to give away. Send your entry marked *Your Cat/ Acu-Cat* to the usual address by May 29, 2007.

Here's how:

1 Pick a time when your kitten is calm and find a location without too many distractions. Sit with your kitten on your lap, or resting between your legs, with his head facing away from you.

2 Take three long breaths in and out, focussing your thoughts for a minute or two on how much you love this little animal and how much you want to contribute to his healthy growth.

3 Starting just behind or below the shoulder blades on each side of the spine, use the index finger and thumb on both hands to very gently pinch his skin. Then move both hands approximately half an inch along towards the tail and repeat the gentle pinching. Continue moving your hands half an inch at a time, softly pinching the skin as you go, until you reach the base of the tail.

4 Repeat the sequence of gentle pinches two more times.

5 When you've completed three cycles of gentle pinches, keeping your fingers together, stroke along his back with one hand on each side of his spine from shoulder blade to tail base. Repeat this sweeping motion three times.

Acupressure will not only relax your cat, but will help build a bond between you both.