



Dogs, horses help U.S. Army fight PTSD

Published: July 3, 2010 at 1:57 AM

WASHINGTON, July 3 (UPI) -- The U.S. Army is employing not only man's best friend but horses as well to help veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, an Army officer says.

"Animals are not just cute," Col. Elspeth Cameron Ritchie said at the annual convention of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. "They provide support."

The U.S. Army is using dogs much more to help soldiers recovering from PTSD, as well as equine therapy, but the effectiveness is mostly based on anecdote, and more research is needed, Ritchie said.

A National Alliance on Mental Illness report, "Depression: Gaps and Guideposts," found about 20 percent of people living with depression have used animal therapy in treatment, with 54 percent finding it "extremely" or "quite a bit" helpful.

"One size does not fit all," Dr. Ira Katz, a senior consultant for mental health services in the office of patient services in the Department of Veterans Affairs, says. "Across the board, more research is needed on evidence-based treatment to provide a broad range of options."

© 2010 United Press International, Inc. All Rights Reserved.