A duck, named Manchinhas (Spotty), was 3 years old when he presented in 2008 with a poor gait and posture due to a congenital or acquired malformation of the tibiotarsal joint (figure 1). The malformation caused limitation of dorsiflexion of the joint with intermittent claudication.

The duck was treated for three sessions of 20 min each using electroacupuncture. The device used was ITO ES 130 (Tokyo, Japan) at low intensity, alternating 2 Hz and 20 Hz each 7–8 min). The needles were placed in pairs ipsilaterally: GB30 and a trigger point in the gluteal muscles (figure 2), ST36 and ST38 in tibialis cranialis. BL40 was stimulated manually. Birds are susceptible to cardiac and respiratory distress when handled, so the patient had to be restrained with care.

After the first treatment the owners reported that, for the first time in months, the animal was able to walk to the pond they have at their home and actually enter the pond, which involved climbing a step. On the third treatment the animal was much improved (figure 3) and was able to perform day-to-day activities without the assistance of its owners, and, at the time of writing in 2012, is still able to do so. The owners decided to stop the treatments because the duck became so stressed at the time of the treatments that they were concerned that the benefits of the treatment may be outweighed by the potential dangers of being restrained for acupuncture.

Images and text kindly provided by Cátia Sá, DVM, CCRP Clinica Veterinária das Oliveiras, Porto, Portugal.

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