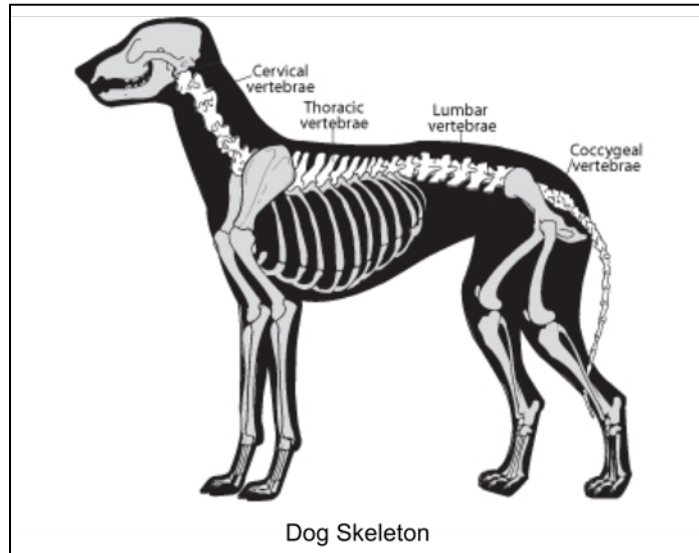


## VETERINARY CHIROPRACTIC CARE

### ***What is chiropractic?***

The term chiropractic comes from the Greek words “cheir” which means ‘hand’ and “praxis” which means ‘practice’ or ‘done by’, and refers to the practice of manipulating the spine to treat disease. Chiropractors base their theories of disease on the connections between various body structures and the nervous system via the spinal column, and on the role of the spine in biomechanics and movement. Therapy is directed at the spine in order to modify the progression of disease.



### ***What is the history of chiropractic in veterinary medicine?***

Spinal manipulation has been practiced for centuries in many cultures, including the early Chinese and Greeks. However, there is a distinct lack of historical documentation of its early use in animal species. In its modern form, chiropractic theory and practice have developed within the last century. Early practitioners of modern chiropractic investigated its use in various animal species. As a distinct practice specialty, veterinary chiropractic is a young profession that is undergoing rapid growth and evolution.

### ***On which species of animals is chiropractic practiced regularly?***

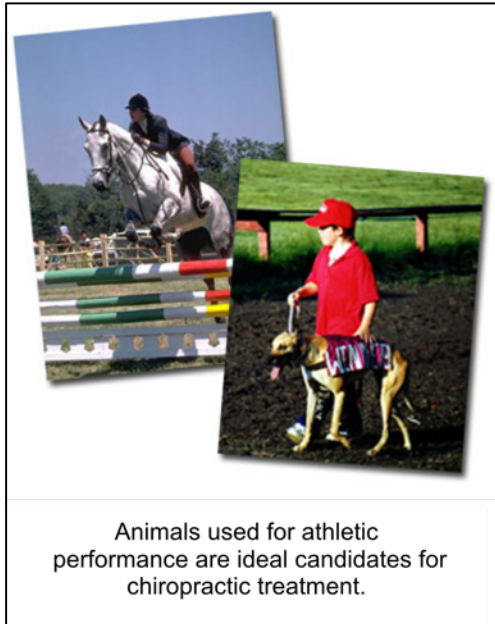
Chiropractic manipulation is frequently performed on horses, dogs, and cats, but can theoretically be performed on any vertebrate species.

### ***Who practices veterinary chiropractic and do I need a referral?***

Chiropractors who work on animals must have specific training in both chiropractic theories and animal anatomy so that they are knowledgeable about the differences in biomechanics and neuromusculoskeletal function between humans and animals. In North America, a certification process is in place to ensure that practitioners possess the appropriate knowledge and skill to treat animals. The organization responsible for this certification is the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association, with specific designation of its members depending on their level of training, as follows: "Animal Chiropractor" is a Doctor of Chiropractic with AVCA certification; "Veterinarian Certified in Animal Chiropractic" is a DVM / VMD certified by AVCA; and "Veterinary Chiropractor" is both a Doctor of Chiropractic and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. In some North American jurisdictions, certified Animal Chiropractors may be permitted to perform treatments without supervision; in other jurisdictions, chiropractors must be supervised by licensed veterinarians. The need for a referral varies by jurisdiction.

### ***What conditions are most often treated with chiropractic?***

Conditions with a neurologic or biomechanical origin are amenable to chiropractic manipulation. These conditions include degenerative joint diseases such as hip dysplasia and spondylosis; cervical instability; acute neck pain; intervertebral disk disease; autonomic nervous system problems such as urinary and fecal incontinence; musculoskeletal weakness or pain that resists conventional diagnosis and treatment; and chronic back and neck pain.



### ***How can my pet benefit from chiropractic?***

Chiropractic is one of the few modalities in veterinary medicine where results are often immediate, and are often seen within minutes of treatment. In general, improvements are defined as an improved gait and an apparent reduction in pain. In orthopedic conditions such as fractures or ligament tears, chiropractic care may not replace the need for surgery, but will be useful in correcting secondary problems caused by compensation or overcompensation to the injury.

Animals used for athletic performance or other working purposes are ideal candidates for chiropractic treatment. By regularly assessing and maintaining maximum flexibility in these animals, injuries may be avoided. Animal athletes include horses used for racing, dressage or pleasure riding, and dogs used in racing, agility training or field trials.

### ***How successful is chiropractic?***

Chiropractors see the patient as a functional whole, rather than as a sum of its parts. Ensuring normal range of motion of vertebrae helps optimize function of lymphatics, blood vessels and nerves, which communicate between the spine and various body structures, allowing the body to function optimally to the point that further interventions may not be required. Applied correctly, chiropractic adjustments can alleviate or eliminate the need for long-term drug or hormone treatments. The success of treatment depends upon the degree of pathology present and the duration of the condition.

### ***How safe is chiropractic?***

When performed by an experienced, trained veterinary professional, chiropractic manipulation is generally considered to be safe. If adjustments are performed with the appropriate force, the patient will require a series of treatments, which will gradually result in restoration of health. However, if the force of an adjustment is excessive or the adjustment is applied at an incorrect angle, time, or location, serious and possibly irreversible damage to the patient can occur. Temporary low-grade discomfort (lasting 24 to 48 hours) may be experienced in a minority of patients following chiropractic treatment.

### ***What is the cost of chiropractic?***

Comprehensive chiropractic treatment involves a thorough history taking and physical examination, followed by a patient assessment and formulation of a treatment plan. It rarely involves a single visit, and costs will vary according to the specific condition being

treated and the response of the patient. The fees associated with chiropractic treatment are set by the individual practitioner, and will often reflect the experience and skill of the chiropractor. Chiropractic is usually very affordable, and is certainly a cost effective way of managing and resolving pain and weakness.

***Can chiropractic be combined with other types of veterinary medicine?***

Chiropractic therapy is often combined with other forms of traditional and alternative veterinary medicine. There appears to be a particularly strong synergy between acupuncture and chiropractic. When multiple types of treatments are used, it may be difficult to determine the efficacy of a chiropractic treatment, unless the treatments are performed at different times. Certified veterinary chiropractors have the knowledge and skill to understand the interactions between different forms of treatment and to interpret the patient's response to therapy. If your pet is receiving chiropractic treatment from a practitioner other than your regular veterinarian, it is *imperative* that both individuals are kept updated about the ongoing treatment in order to provide coordinated care of your pet, to allow proper evaluation of treatment and to minimize any avoidable interactions or interferences.

***How can I find out more information about veterinary chiropractic?***

The most efficient way to find current reference materials, links, and referral lists is to consult the Alternative Veterinary Medicine website at [www.altvetmed.com](http://www.altvetmed.com).

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Steve Marsden, DVM ND MSOM LAc DiplCH  
AHG, Shawn Messonnier, DVM and Cheryl Yuill, DVM, MSc, CVH.  
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