



VETERINARY
CHIROPRACTIC
QUESTION AND
ANSWER GUIDE

WHEN IS CHIROPRACTIC CARE USEFUL?

The purpose of chiropractic care is to optimize health. As such, all animals could benefit from regular chiropractic care.

While chiropractic care is commonly associated with primary disorders of the back and neck, its usefulness is not limited to these areas. In that the nervous system controls every function of the body, it is easy to see that a disruption to some portion of the nervous system could have an adverse affect in many areas. The spinal nerves exit the spinal column at each vertebral joint. These nerves innervate every structure in the body, including the internal organs. If there is a decreased range of motion at the vertebral joint where the nerve exits the spinal canal, it is likely that there may be accompanying



inflammation and muscle spasm. This will affect the transmission of nerve signals between the body and the brain. This can lead to significant dysfunction either in the animal's motor function or in the function of the animal's internal organs. By adjusting this vertebral subluxation complex, the animal can function more normally.

Chiropractic is commonly used as an adjunct in the treatment of many lamenesses and biomechanical abnormalities. There are many cases in which the traditional lameness exam does not fully identify the source of the lameness. Frequently, chiropractic care can provide useful information and treatment for these animals. Additionally, correction of chiropractic abnormalities may help other therapies such as intra-articular injections to be more effective and to have a more long lasting result.

Similarly, there are many examples of medical conditions that do not fully respond to traditional care. Chiropractic should be considered as a treatment option in these cases. Chiropractic may be able to address a component of the problem that cannot be solved by medications alone. It is also possible that through chiropractic adjustment the body is better able to respond to the medications of traditional care.

HOW IS CHIROPRACTIC USED IN ANIMALS?

The treatment procedures utilized by Dr. Johnson in the practice of animal chiropractic include the adjustment of vertebrae, the adjustment of the extremities and the adjustment of cranial sutures. Dr. Johnson will frequently include management advice as to what is needed to insure proper response to chiropractic care.

Dr. Johnson will take a thorough case history, including information from the owner about the animal's occupation and exercise schedule, information obtained from previous veterinary examinations, radiographs or laboratory analysis, as well as previous diagnoses and therapies.

After obtaining a history on the animal, Dr. Johnson will examine the animal. The examinations performed include, but are not limited to: posture analysis, gait analysis, evaluation for areas of increased temperature or heat, vertebral, extremity and cranial static palpation, vertebral and extremity motion palpation, short leg analysis, orthopedic evaluation and neurological evaluation.

The information from the case history and examination are combined to determine a working diagnosis. Dr. Johnson will then formulate a therapeutic plan and proceed with treatment, which will include adjusting vertebral subluxation complexes, adjusting subluxation complexes in the extremities, and/or referring the patient back to his primary care veterinarian for further examination or care.

Dr. Johnson works closely with your regular veterinarian to insure that your animal receives complete integrative health care.

WHAT CAN CAUSE DAMAGE TO THE SPINE?

- . Trauma – falls, trips, cast in stall
- . Narcotics - general anesthesia
- . Transportation
- . Lack of adequate room to move - long periods in stall with no opportunity to ease tension by bucking and rolling
- . Performance – every event strains the spine in a different specific way
- . Rider – problems with the rider's seat (crooked seat)
- . Shoes – poor hoof care or incorrect shoeing
- . Poor saddle fit
- . Birthing Difficulties
- . Age - as age increases the effects of previous small and/or large traumas to the spine become more apparent
- . Activities of everyday living (repetitive trauma over time)

WHAT ARE SOME SYMPTOMS THAT INDICATE MY HORSE MAY BENEFIT FROM CHIROPRACTIC CARE?

- . Back Pain
- . Neck Pain
- . Reduced Performance
- . Abnormal Posture
- . Snapping and pinning ears when being saddled
- . Resistance to aids when being ridden
- . Head throwing, back hollowing
- . Disobedience when jumping
- . Difficulties with collected or lateral gaits
- . Changes in behavior
- . Frightened or painful facial expression
- . Sensitivity to touch
- . Muscle atrophy
- . Difficulty flexing the poll
- . Stiffness when starting to work
- . Difficulty bending
- . Difficult with lead changes



In addition to the above symptoms, veterinary chiropractic care may be useful in the following disease conditions by correcting biomechanical abnormalities of the spine or extremities:

- . Navicular Syndrome
- . Upward fixation of the patella (locking stifles)
- . Stringhalt
- . Arthritis

HOW OFTEN WILL MY HORSE NEED TO BE ADJUSTED?

The protocol for each horse will be determined individually based on the findings of the veterinary chiropractic exam, the discipline of the horse and the horse's training regime.

In most cases, a single treatment is not enough to eliminate the problem. The goal of veterinary chiropractic treatment is to address neurological dysfunction in the spine and restore mobility. It is then the task of muscles and ligaments to support the spine and maintain the restored motion of the spinal joints.

Most horses will show significant improvement after one to four treatments. Chronic problems usually take longer to resolve requiring more chiropractic adjustments, while horses with acute problems often respond more quickly. Once the horse has achieved significant improvement, a supportive care schedule will be established if needed.

HOW CAN CHIROPRACTIC CARE HELP A HORSE WITH NAVICULAR DISEAS?

Chiropractic care has the potential to help the horse with navicular disease by changing the biomechanics of the way the horse stands. For example, if a horse stands with his front legs too far underneath his body, this puts additional strain on the deep flexor tendon. The deep flexor tendon attaches to the back of the coffin bone and runs over the back of the navicular bone. If there is strain on the deep flexor tendon, this effectively jams the navicular bone into the back of the coffin bone and the 2nd phalanx with the result of there being additional pressure on the navicular bone. This can lead to degeneration of the navicular bone. By adjusting the horse, it is possible to correct the abnormal stance and thereby relieve the strain on the deep digital flexor and thereby the pressure on the navicular bone.