

**Chiropractic for Animals**  
**ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE**  
**Information Sheet A-WS144/09**  
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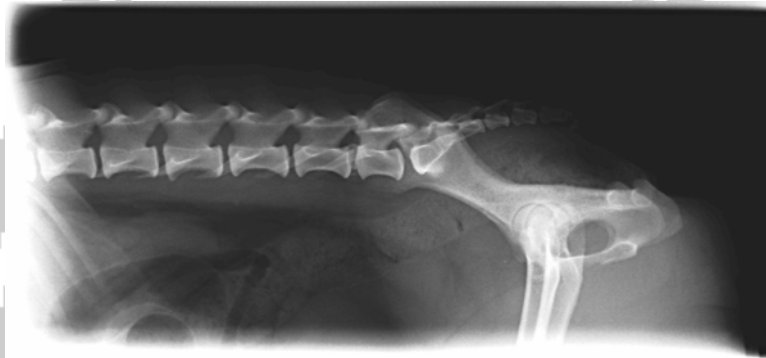
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**CHIROPRACTIC MANIPULATION FOR ANIMALS**



*All patients at the AVMC are examined with a view to chiropractic health and are given chiropractic manipulation if needed. If deemed necessary, manipulation is integrated with [acupuncture](#) or [LASER therapy](#). Back problems and neck problems are widespread, whether in horses, dogs, cats or other species, although this is not always recognised to be the case. The usual veterinary training unfortunately tends to overlook this large and needful area of veterinary practice. This is very sad, in view of how widespread the problems are and how distressing and disabling back pain can be. Animals that have been successfully manipulated demonstrate their relief and pleasure almost immediately, even in cases where the back pain prior to manipulation had not been at all apparent to casual observation.*

*What is it?*



The name 'chiropractic' implies the use of manual therapy (the derivation is from Ancient Greek: *χειρος* - a hand; *πραξις* - a doing or transaction). This is a form of manipulation of the musculo-skeletal system, particularly the back (the spine). It differs from osteopathy in the manner of manipulation and in some of the theory and motivation. Chiropractic usually relies on

high frequency, low amplitude action and tends to concentrate on bones and their

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interrelationships. Osteopathy usually relies on low frequency, high amplitude adjustments and tends to concentrate on muscles and ligaments. The effect of these differences, **as a generalisation**, is that the movement in chiropractic is almost imperceptible and very fast, whereas in osteopathy, long levering actions may be used by the osteopath. In chiropractic, the action acts as a stimulus to the body to self-correct, it is not imposed upon the body. This makes it a natural bed-fellow of energy medicine. In osteopathy it can be more the therapist who performs the realignment.

Spinal manipulation was used by the Ancient Chinese, probably from about 2,700 BC. Records in English stem from the mid 17th Century. Palmer is credited as the founder of modern chiropractic, in the early 20th Century. Two patients convinced him of the benefits of spinal manipulation, a deaf man and one with heart trouble, both of whom experienced great improvements in their conditions, after manipulation. He worked on both animals and humans.



**Daniel David Palmer (1845 - 1913)**



Horse's pelvis,  
tail, sacrum,  
hips and  
sacro-iliac  
joint

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Since all the organs and tissues of the body receive much of their automatic (autonomic) innervation on a segmental basis, from between the vertebrae, the value of correct spinal alignment for optimum body function and balance is clear, quite apart from any pain issues stemming from misalignment. The function of proprioceptive (position sense), motor and sensory nerves can be similarly affected. Organ and muscle function can therefore be deeply affected by misalignments and released for proper activity by judicious realignment.

### *Practical Application*

*"Yippee! 1000% improvement! Different horse completely, Instructor couldn't believe it when saw him move – on the right hand side of his wither, he used to sweat profusely and now not sweating at all! Will be in touch if he needs manipulation again."*

At the **AVMC**, each patient is given a chiropractic assessment, whether horse, pony, goat, donkey, cow, cat or dog, whether bird, rabbit or snake. This is an integral part of a proper holistic assessment. Many dogs and horses can have a [back problem](#) that has gone unnoticed, which can be a source of pain and reduced well-being. Manipulation (chiropractic treatment) is recommended and performed, if there is a need. This procedure in itself can create immediate and dramatic relaxation and [pain relief](#) for a patient, often even when owners had until then been unaware of a problem in the spine or elsewhere in the musculo-skeletal system. The obvious positive response of many patients is a delight. Just as in humans, the 'wear and tear' of modern life can cause axial skeletal misalignments, the correction of which can be of enormous benefit to the patient. It is mostly horse backs and dog backs on which we have to work, although cat backs also commonly require attention. On the farm, chiropractic can be enormously valuable but it is usually only show cattle that are presented, thus enhancing their show potential. Back work (back treatment) is a major part of the activity of the **AVMC**.

Critics of the technique tend to maintain that a practitioner is unable to alter the alignment of bones, particularly in a horse's skeleton. However, this ideological and theoretical position neglects the fact that chiropractic manipulation is not the motive power in itself; it is only the stimulus and guidance to the body's innate corrective capability. Those who doubt the scope of this gentle form of therapy should witness it at work. Good science comes first from observation. Another myth is that manipulation should never be offered to a dog with IVDD (intervertebral disc disease, disc prolapse). We find that GENTLE and sensitive manipulation is very much required, properly integrated with the other therapies used (e.g. [Acupuncture](#) and [Homeopathy](#)) if we are to attain rapid healing and a return to more normal lifestyle as quickly as possible. So far, we have never needed to consign a patient to surgery for a disc problem, even when there has been severe paralysis before treatment.

### *Horse's head, neck and shoulder*



The examination at the **AVMC** (or at a yard or home visit) includes face, jaw, skull, neck, shoulders, back and pelvis, not forgetting limbs and tail (the face, jaw, skull and tail are often omitted in common chiropractic practice, to the great potential detriment of the patient - in fact, successful spinal alignment and alignment of the rest of the body can sometimes

absolutely depend upon correct jaw alignment and action, for instance). Misalignment in any of these areas is likely to cause pain and functional impairment. Correction can [relieve pain](#), enhance quality of life (which is, after all, a vet's main purpose in life) and basic health. In a working horse or dog, correction can, understandably, make a huge difference to performance and, very importantly, reduce the chances of secondary (or compensatory) injury. The limbs and joints may also require attention.

Prime regions for a back problem are the face, the temporo-mandibular joint, the atlanto-occipital joint, the lower neck, the wither, the thoraco-lumbar junction, the lumbo-sacral junction, the sacro-iliac joint and the tail. Shoulder lameness can also originate in a lower neck problem, in some cases, and can respond to chiropractic treatment.

[Acupuncture](#) and chiropractic manipulation can be mutually enhancing, so we integrate them at the **AVMC**, in all cases that receive acupuncture.

[Physiotherapy](#) can be very helpful to injured animals or those with back pain. However, at the **AVMC** we believe that this should only be performed AFTER correction of spinal and skeletal alignment issues. It may even cause more pain, if underlying problems are not corrected beforehand.

*The AVMC accepts referrals in Veterinary Acupuncture, Veterinary Homeopathy, Veterinary Herbal Medicine, back problems in dogs, back problems in horses, back problems in cats, back problems in all species.*

**N.B.** If using the services of a chiropractor who is not a fully-qualified vet, ensure that the practitioner observes the provisions of the [Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966](#) and preferably use a properly-qualified animal chiropractor. The Veterinary Surgeons Act requires chiropractors to work at the **specific request** of and under the **guidance** or **supervision** of a veterinary surgeon. They should not attend animals without proper veterinary involvement. Chiropractors are not permitted to prescribe and supply medicines (e.g. homeopathic) for an animal. Beware 'cowboy'



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back men. **Chiropractors are not permitted to use the adjective 'veterinary' in connection with their work** (although some do so). At the **AVMC**, chiropractic manipulation is performed by a vet (i.e. veterinary chiropractic manipulation), thus making ideal on-the-spot integration of different therapies possible.



**Step 1** - Obtain a proper veterinary assessment and diagnosis. If this includes a full [holistic](#) assessment, so much the better.

**Step 2** - Your vet is supposed to discuss the full range of treatment options with you. This may include Alternative Therapy and may include chiropractic manipulation. If neither is mentioned, yet you feel that you wish to explore the possibility, it is recommended that you should discuss the possibilities with your vet at the time of the visit.

**N.B.** You will find that your insurance may be invalidated if you use an unqualified practitioner or one who operates outside the [Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966](#) (see above).

In addition, it should be noted that animal therapists (chiropractors, osteopaths and physiotherapists), who are properly trained and qualified, will be members of their respective professional bodies and should be covered by indemnity insurance, as are vets. This protects you, should anything go amiss.



**John McTimoney (1914 - 1980) , the founder of the McTimoney Chiropractic Association and the Oxfordshire School of Chiropractic, now the McTimoney College of Chiropractic**

We have a particular interest in back problems and back treatment in animals, frequently being called upon to treat horse back problems, pony back problems, dog back problems etc., as a significant part of the **AVMC's** workload. Manipulation, Acupuncture, LASER therapy etc. are employed to seek resolution of such problems, with holistic appraisal of shoeing and saddling in addition, in the case of horses and ponies.

This service is also offered for animals in zoos or circuses - a personal ambition is to perform this on a giraffe! May be it wouldn't be such a challenge as doing chiropractic on a hedgehog - or even a tortoise? However, despite the massive variation in conformation, ALL mammals have just seven cervical vertebrae, from hedgehogs to giraffes, from elephants to gazelles, from mice to humans.

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