

Ask the Vet

Hunter Hodges, DVM

A native of Virginia, Dr. Hodges came to Greensboro in 1985 and graduated from UNCG with a Biology degree. He received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1997 from Tuskegee University in Alabama and currently co-owns Brassfield Animal Hospital. His interest in alternative medicine led him to get certifications in acupuncture and chiropractic which he has integrated into his practice to treat dogs, horses and cats. He is a member of the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society, American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture, International Veterinary Chiropractic Association, NCVMA, AVMA, and AAEP.



What Is Animal Chiropractic Care?

Chiropractic care mainly addresses the spine but may also involve adjustments to the lower limbs. The spine starts at the base of the skull and is composed of vertebral segments all the way to the tail. Each vertebra of the spine is connected by multiple ligaments and joints making it very flexible but movement to the entire spine is critical to the overall health and well being of the animal. Nerves come off the spinal cord and travel through small spaces in the vertebra, and then go to muscles, organs, glands etc. Problems occur when a joint in the spine becomes "stuck" and does not move in its full range of normal motion. When a joint gets "stuck", it is called a Vertebral Subluxation Complex (VSC). A VSC can have many causes, but the most common is some form of trauma such as a slip, fall, or even day to day repetitive activity. The lack of mobility in the vertebral joints leads to inflammation and swelling in the region, often causing muscle spasms and pain. The goal of Chiropractic care is to reestablish the full range of motion to the stuck joint with an adjustment thus relieving inflammation of the nerves.

How Does Chiropractic Care Help?

Chiropractic care utilizes very specific, quick, shallow adjustments of the spine using the doctor's hand or fingers to restore normal range of motion to the stuck joint. The thrust will restore normal range of motion of the joint and relieve the pain and inflammation cycle caused by the stuck joint. It is important to note that all adjustments are made within the joints normal range of motion. When people complain about back or joint pain, they often say something is "out" but most often nothing is out of joint but rather stuck in its normal range of motion. If something was truly out then this would be an emergency situation such as a dislocated hip or shoulder. These are dramatic, severely painful situations and are not a part of normal chiropractic care.

What Do Adjustments Accomplish?

When the normal range of motion is reestablished by the adjustment, the animal can move in a more comfortable and coordinated manner. Symptoms like abnormal gait or posture, neck or back pain, and reluctance to jump or climb stairs will often improve. Dogs doing agility or performance activities will also benefit from routine adjustments.

How Often Should Adjusting Be Done?

The frequency of adjustments varies by animal and severity of the case. There will be some cases where the VSC can be fixed with one treatment and others where routine work is necessary to help prevent problems. A lot will depend on the use and activity level of the animal. It's

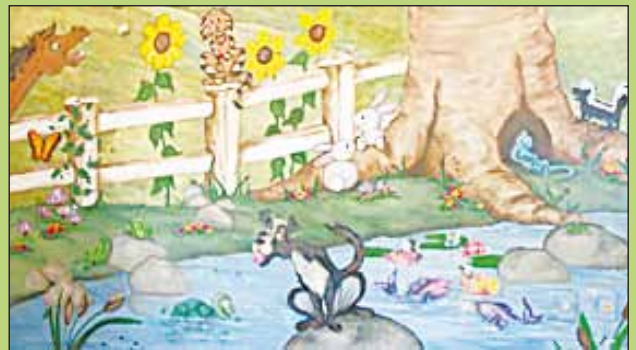
similar to comparing a fairly inactive person to a football player. The less active person goes to the chiropractor once or twice a year when they get a stiff neck and the football player who gets whacked around every day may need weekly adjustments. In general most animals will show improvement after 1-4 treatments. Acute problems often respond quickly while chronic or longstanding problems will require more along with maintenance treatments.

Do Animals Like Chiropractic Adjustments?

Most animals do seem to relax and enjoy the attention but there are a few worry warts that get a little stressed until they figure out what's going on after a few treatments. Ultimately though, the goal is to help our pets be more comfortable and minimize or reduce dosages of long term medications.

How Will I Know If My Pet Needs Adjusting?

All animals should be under regular veterinary care. If you suspect a problem with your animal that may be helped by chiropractic therapy, have your veterinarian examine the animal first and then contact a veterinarian trained and certified in chiropractic care.



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Dr. Hunter Hodges • Dr. Ralph Yerex • Dr. John Carr

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