



By Dr. Andi Harper
Harper's Ridge Chiropractic Care

How Do I Know If My Dog Needs Chiropractic Care?

of a problem in the spine, which protects the spinal cord. All of the nerves that come out of the spinal cord exit between the individual vertebrae that make up the spine. When there is a vertebra that is not moving properly it puts pressure on the nerves that pass by it. Often this results in back or neck pain at that spot. However, sometimes problems are seen further down the pathway of the affected nerve(s). These problems may be pain, spasm, lameness or weakness in another area of the body, or problems with an internal organ that is the endpoint of the nerve.

According to the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association, Chiropractic care is appropriate in the treatment of:

- Neck, back, leg and tail pain
- Muscle spasms
- Disc problems
- "Neurologic" or "knuckling over" most commonly seen in rear legs
- Lick Granuloma, more common in the front legs
- Joint problems, limping/lameness
- Injuries from slips, falls, accidents
- "Sloppy Sitting" with legs off to one side, may be seen in your puppy or adult dog
- Event or sports injuries
- Post-surgical care (frequently following TPLO surgery)
- Bowel, bladder and internal medicine disorders
- Maintenance of joint and spinal health

Numerous common stressful or traumatic situations can cause abnormal or restricted movement to occur in the spine. This change in proper movement of the spine is what chiropractors call a "subluxation." When a subluxation occurs, the dog's spine loses its normal flexibility. This results in stiffness, which further leads to resistance and decreased performance. The most common symptom associated with spinal subluxations is pain, which can manifest itself in a variety of ways.

A surprising number of problems that may seem unrelated to a "back problem," actually are a direct result

Is there such thing as a "usual" chiropractic patient? Hmm... generally I work with two groups of patients. The first group is the geriatric or senior group that has a hard time getting up from a seated or lying position, going up stairs and getting in the car. Their owners have been to the vet and they may be taking medication for pain/arthritis that is usually helpful but their owners want only the best quality of life for their pet's final years and they are looking for something more. They are looking to make their beloved pet more comfortable because when it comes right down to it, they are an important part of the family and they deserve the best.

The second group is the younger pet that is still feeling invincible and gets out there and plays and lives life to the fullest. They also have awesome, concerned owners that only want the best for them down the line and they call me to help prevent the aches and pains caused by arthritis that may be in their pet's future. Preventative chiropractic care works very well and is minimally recommended every 6 months.

I also have to add that there is no true "usual" chiropractic patient. Do I see a greater number of dachshunds and corgis because they have longer backs and shorter legs? Do I see a lot of large breed dogs because they are more prone



to arthritis in the rear end? Do I see a great number of small breeds that are sore in the front end because they are constantly jumping down off the furniture? Do I see agility dogs because they like to fly in the air to please their owners? Do I see the weekend warriors that go to the dog park four times a year and manage to run and play themselves into pain? Do I see a greater number of senior dogs? Do I see show dogs where their gait needs to be as close to perfect as possible? Do I see many labs that play too hard and become sore? Do I see a great number of dogs of every size and shape that went outside and came back in the house lame? Do I see a lot of dogs that we don't know if chiropractic care will help? The

answer is a resounding YES! I am continually amazed every single day at what chiropractic can do for our most beloved pets!!

"Chiropractic is both treatment and prevention. It has much to offer, from improving the quality of life of the geriatric to enhancing the performance of the athlete, and all patients in between..."
The Canadian Veterinary Journal, October 1999

For more information on how chiropractic care can help your dog, please call Dr. Andi Harper at

Harper's Ridge Chiropractic Care 303.518.3688 or visit her website at www.HarpersRidge.com.

Dr. Harper is a Doctor of Chiropractic and a Certified Animal Chiropractor. She completed five years of chiropractic-medical school in 2002 and immediately went onto her post-graduate education in animal chiropractic. She completed her AVCA certified program in January 2003.

Chiropractic care is a holistic approach to many health and performance problems of the dog. Chiropractic care does not replace traditional veterinary medicine or surgery, but provides a complementary method of care.