



Jackie Leftwich - Chiropractor [McTimoney/STR/IAVC]
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How can Chiropractic help my dog?

Dogs can suffer from back pain and musculoskeletal problems just like humans. Many dogs can benefit from chiropractic treatment, whether your dog is a pet, or works hard as part of their job, or is involved in activities such as showing, agility, trials, racing or flyball. Particular breeds and working dogs can have problems due to a genetic predisposition or the nature of their work. Agility dogs have to move quickly and run, turn and jump around and over obstacles and so can lose their footing whilst turning at speed. Greyhounds are always asked to run counter-clockwise on a track and this repetitive one directional activity can result in asymmetric muscle tone and uneven body wear. Long backed and short legged breeds can be susceptible to different issues just as a direct result of their conformation.

Whether a dog has been involved in some type of trauma or accident, or whether it is just repetitive micro-traumas from living life to the full, many dogs can benefit from chiropractic which can provide them with gentle and effective relief to help them cope with the everyday stresses and strains of life and just being a dog! Waterside Chiropractic uses recognised techniques that provide a non-invasive holistic treatment which works to realign and balance the musculoskeletal system, restoring health, movement, soundness and performance through manipulation that targets restrictions within the joints, relieving muscle tension and associated discomfort. No anaesthetic or drugs are needed and comprehensive individualised after-care advice and support forms part of the package.

Common causes of back pain and musculoskeletal problems in the dog

- Constant pulling on the lead, halti or harness
- Falls, slips and tumbles at home on slippery floors or whilst out being exercised
- Rough play with friends and toys, e.g. tug games, chasing companions and bowling each other over
- Direct consequence of trauma, e.g. road traffic accidents
- Compensation from other injuries or illness
- Repetitive training and other one-directional activities that place stresses asymmetrically on the body
- Athletic injuries or injuries obtained whilst working, racing or doing agility
- Whelping
- Altered gait as a result of injury or illness or other biomechanical or locomotory changes.





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Common symptoms that your dog might show if they have back pain or musculoskeletal problems

Please note that the following signs and symptoms may be as a result of a veterinary condition and if your dog is displaying any of these, then in the first instance you should be consulting your veterinary surgeon for their opinion. Your vet will then be able to refer you on to a chiropractor for treatment if there is no underlying primary veterinary medical condition causing the presenting symptoms or affecting your dog's behaviour.

- Uneven or unlevel gait, or crab like movement
- Stiffness after rest or exercise
- Limping/lameness
- Crying out when getting up or moving
- Difficulty going up/down stairs or getting in/out of cars
- Signs of discomfort when being stroked or handled or touched in certain areas
- Reluctance or intolerance of exercise, lethargy
- Deterioration in performance or energy levels
- Behavioural changes
- Asymmetric muscle tone
- Always sitting or lying on one side
- Uneven pad and claw wear
- Tripping or stumbling, dragging toes or feet
- Pacing
- Knocking down fences in agility
- Not wanting to stand square

Benefits of chiropractic and physical therapy for dogs

- Relief from pain and discomfort
- Elimination or reduction of symptom(s) causing initial referral for chiropractic treatment
- Increased rate of healing and rehabilitation following trauma
- Increased flexibility, mobility and improved joint range of motion
- Prevention and reduction of biomechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system
- Changes to thoracolumbar and pelvic kinematics and improvements in pelvic symmetry

Owners have also reported:

- Relaxation and a decrease in stress levels
- Increased length and evenness of stride, improved inter and intra limb co-ordination
- Reduced post-exercise muscle soreness and accelerated recovery from exercise/hard work





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What can I expect from the treatment?

Chiropractic is a whole body assessment and treatment that considers your dog holistically. The chiropractor will first take a detailed record card about your dog, some information of their medical history to date, the symptoms that are concerning you as the owner and some general information about how they are coping with everyday issues and life itself. The chiropractor will check your dog over, observing their conformation and how this could possibly predispose to any possible concerns and then undertake a gait analysis, i.e. watch how they walk and trot. Following this, they will then palpate (feel) the bones, joints and musculature and feel for any reduction in joint range of motion, muscle asymmetry or misalignments (please see leaflet "What is Chiropractic and How Does Chiropractic Work?" for further information on the premise behind the treatment). They will then discuss their findings with you and if you are happy to go ahead with the proposed plan of treatment, treat your dog and provide tailored aftercare and rehabilitative advice.

How many treatments will my dog need?

It is important to follow a course of treatment and follow ups are a very important part of the process. It may have taken years for the body to get into the position that it currently is, so usually one treatment is not likely to resolve a problem or presenting condition. It will also depend on the type and extent of an injury or disease and how long the dog has had the condition as to how long the body will take to heal or change – we need to remember that healing is a process that can take time and true changes will continue following each treatment.

Most dogs require 2 or 3 initial treatments and then once they have completed the initial course and are functioning at the most optimal level attainable for them, it is extremely beneficial to continue with maintenance by having treatment 2 or 3 times a year to keep everything in line. These can help prevent a reoccurrence of the original condition or a new condition from occurring and are highly recommended in all cases. Generally, this will then be all that is needed unless a new condition occurs or a situation happens where the dog has a fall or accident, or a new symptom occurs, when an additional treatment or two at that time may help.





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Common reactions to treatment

There are various normal reactions to treatment and although aftercare advice is tailored to meet the individual dog's specific needs, general advice that applies to all after treatment is to have a couple of days of quiet to allow the treatment to settle. The reason for quiet after treatment is because the body has to take on board the adjustments and changes and realign itself and its functions.

For a couple of days the dog may feel sore, tired, stiff or achy whilst their body adapts before they will start to feel better. Equally, they may feel a lot better immediately and in some respects, this can be far more difficult to manage as they may want to run and charge about because they feel so much better! Quiet short walks on the lead and no rough or tumble with friends or tug games in the first few days after treatment is beneficial so as to maximise the effects of the treatment. If your dog competes, then it is better to ensure that any treatment is carried out allowing plenty of time after the treatment (approximately 1 week) to enable your dog to make a positive response to the changes and then they should feel at their best for the competition.

It is also important to ensure that they are kept warm and that you provide them with plenty of water to drink which will help any toxins released into the body by the effects of treatment to be moved to the lymph system to be excreted. Exercise routines should normally be reduced initially building it back up over the first week or so until they are eased back into their old routine. If the chiropractor feels that there are some changes in routine or specific exercises required to improve and strengthen the musculature, bones and joints, then these will be discussed within the aftercare advice so that the chiropractor, dog and owner, can consider any changes to their normal routines or exercise sessions in order to implement these.

Can chiropractors work alongside my Veterinary Surgeon?

The treatment of animals is regulated under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and chiropractors or others that practice disciplines that involve the treatment, manipulation or physical therapy of animals may only work with animals with the permission of a veterinary surgeon. This is to safeguard the health and welfare of animals and to protect owners and their animals from incompetent and unqualified practice. Most veterinary surgeons are aware of the benefits of chiropractic care for animals and will readily give their permission for animals in their care to receive chiropractic treatment.

