

Jackie Leftwich - Chiropractor [McTimoney/STR/IAVC]
BSc MSc AMC MMCA FRCC (Animal)

Waterside Chiropractic
Waterside Farm
Wophams Lane
Birdham
Chichester
West Sussex PO20 7BS

Telephone: 07738 110570

E-mail: info@watersidechiropractic.co.uk

Website: www.watersidechiropractic.co.uk

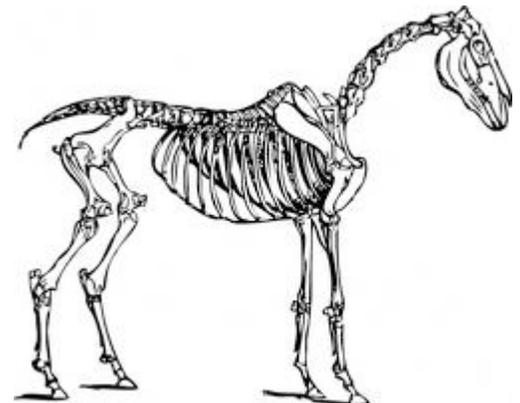
How can Chiropractic help my horse?

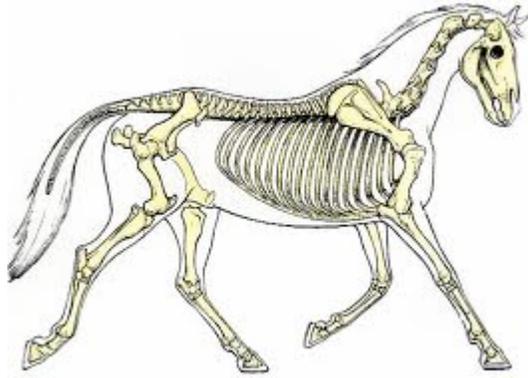
Horses and ponies can suffer from back pain and musculoskeletal problems just like humans. Most domestic equines do not live out their days in the same way as their ancestors, grazing the wilds in their herds whilst avoiding predators. Today, most horses are expected to perform physically and carry a rider and tack, be that as an equine athlete that regularly competes in dressage, showjumping, eventing, endurance, racing, polo, showing, carriage driving or hunting. Even those equines that do not compete can have challenging working lives as a riding school horse/pony, and albeit less common nowadays, some of our larger equines are still regularly involved in heavy agricultural work. The demands that we humans put on our horses are numerous and many are regularly pushed to the extreme of their physical and physiological capabilities and limitations. This can result in horses with muscle imbalances and tension, caused by rider imbalance, asymmetrical muscle development, or by expecting too much from a horse whose conformation and/or musculature is not up to the challenge.

Whether a horse has been involved in some type of trauma or accident, or whether it is just repetitive micro-traumas from the demands that we place upon them, most horses 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. 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 horse

- Direct consequence of trauma, e.g. falls, road traffic accidents
- Compensation from other injuries or illness
- Conformational compensations
- Poor foot balance
- Unbalanced riders or not being evenly worked which result in stresses being placed asymmetrically on the body
- Altered gait and/or lameness as a result of injury or illness or other biomechanical or locomotory changes
- Getting cast
- Poorly fitting tack and rugs
- Sharp teeth
- Inappropriate work intensity or insufficient warm up/cool down.





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Common symptoms that your horse 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 horse 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 horse's behaviour. Some of these symptoms may also be caused by poor foot balance/shoeing, poorly fitting tack or teeth.

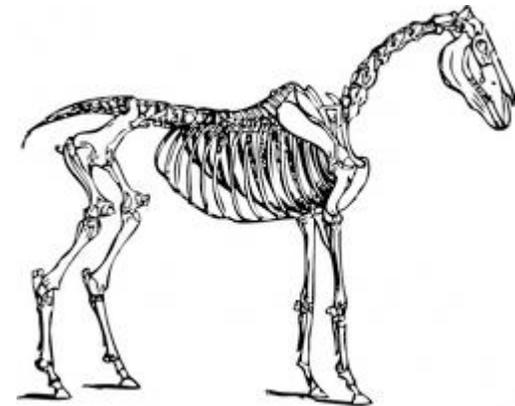
- Behavioural changes, unexplained loss or deterioration in usual performance or energy levels
- Bucking, rearing, napping, unexplained resistance, refusing to jump or jumping to one side
- Frequently knocking down of jumps, reluctance to jump through combinations/spreads, not travelling through the air or unable to bascule effectively
- Stiffness on one rein, inability to track up, uneven or unlevel gait, either in front or behind
- Asymmetrical muscle tone, uneven muscle development, hypertrophy or atrophy of muscles
- Lack of impulsion, difficulty in engaging the hindquarters, unwillingness to go forward or extend
- Rushing into canter/striking off incorrectly, changing legs, preference for one canter lead or trot diagonal, bunny hopping or going disunited in canter, difficulty carrying out lateral movements
- Leaning on one rein, head shaking or tilting the head to one side when being ridden
- Constantly resting a leg, continually shifting weight when standing still, not wanting to stand square
- Cold backed or biting or kicking out when groomed, girthed or mounted
- Uneven pressure from the saddle or saddle slips to one side
- Lack of and/or reducing level of topline musculature
- Carrying the tail to one side
- Tripping or stumbling, toe dragging, uneven hoof/shoe wear

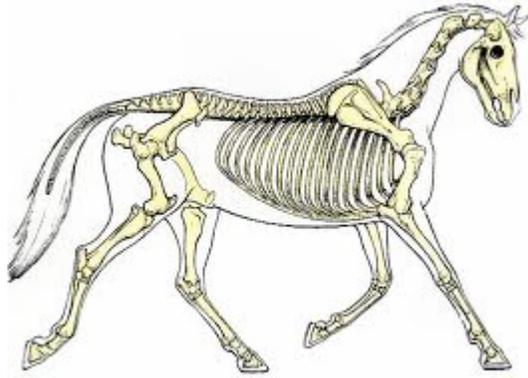
Benefits of chiropractic and physical therapy for horses

- 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?

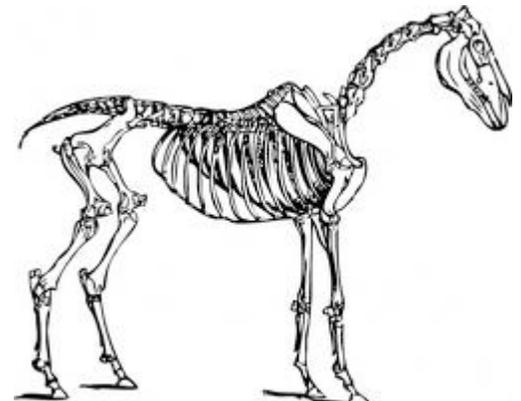
Chiropractic is a whole body assessment and treatment that considers your horse holistically. The chiropractor will first take a detailed record card about your horse, some information on their medical history to date, the symptoms that are concerning you as the owner and some general information about how they are coping with everyday issues and life itself. As shoeing, tack and teeth can have a huge impact on the horse and their way of going and well-being, the chiropractor will also want to discuss these elements with you and work with your farrier, saddler and equine dentist where required.

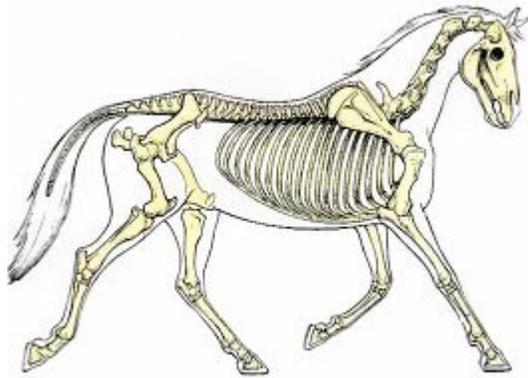
The chiropractor will check your horse over for any areas of heat, swelling or abnormalities, observing their conformation and how this could possibly predispose to any possible concerns; then undertake a gait and basic neurological analysis, i.e. watch how they walk, trot, back up and turn in small tight circles. Following this, they will 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 horse and provide tailored aftercare and rehabilitative advice.

How many treatments will my horse 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 get the body to realign first time. It will also depend on the type and extent of an injury or disease and how long the horse 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 horses 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 horse 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 horse or pony'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 horse 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 with their friends in the field because they feel so much better! Short hacks and a reduction in work levels or exercise programs is normally advised; normal recommendations tend to include straight line work and large 20 metre circles, incorporating walk and trot only in the first few days after treatment building up to a return to normal work and exercise routines. This is beneficial so as to maximise the effects of the treatment. If your horse competes, then it is better to try to ensure that any treatment is carried out allowing plenty of time after the treatment (approximately 1 week) to enable your horse 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 your horse will be 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. If the chiropractor feels that there are some changes in schooling/exercise or stable management routine, or that specific exercises are required to improve and strengthen the musculature, bones and joints, then these will be discussed within the aftercare advice so that the chiropractor, horse and owner, can work together in order to implement these and maximise the effects of treatment and optimise the horse's physique, behaviour and performance.

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.

