



# Feature Article

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## Help Your “Best Friend” Maintain a Good Quality of Life

By: Rachel M. Anderson, Freelance writer

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** This is a feature article about pet chiropractic, a relatively new specialty that is getting a lot of attention right now. The article and accompanying images are being offered to you cost free and copyright free.



**Caption:** A simple adjustment to the neck is all it will take to relieve this canine’s stiffness.



**Caption:** Gray Kimbrell, P.A., is able to easily relieve a horse’s stiffness by adjusting its back.



**Caption:** Grey Kimbrell, P.A., gets to know one of his equine patients before doing an adjustment.

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(Hayward, Wisc.) – Finn is a retired show horse who has not yet gone out to pasture. “He still works out every day, whether in an arena or out on the trails,” says his owner, Juli Lynch of Hayward, Wisc., “but because he is an older horse, there are times when he experiences stiffness or a decrease in his range of motion.”

Lucy is an 11-year-old Pug who in recent months started having trouble walking. “We got concerned when she started dragging her back feet behind her instead of walking on them,” says Julie McKuras of Apple Valley, Minn. “Lucy was diagnosed with a neurological problem that’s often associated with old age in that breed. The vet told us there wasn’t much he could do about it, just give her medicine for the pain. I was afraid we’d have to put her down.”

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Despite their problems, both animals are enjoying what their owners consider a good quality of life, today, thanks to animal chiropractic. Like with people, when the bones of their spines and the joints are out of alignment, animals can experience considerable pain and discomfort. Even a subtle change in the alignment can affect the nervous system, local muscles and joints as well as the distant organ, gland and body functions.

Whether the animal suffered the misalignment while at work or play, or simply as a result of the aging process, the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association points out that chiropractic is the best treatment. While medication may or may not relieve the pain, it doesn't address the problem of joint restriction that often causes the pain. Conversely, by normalizing spinal motion and neurological function, chiropractic addresses the underlying problem and alleviates the cause of pain.

Among the symptoms chiropractic can be used to help relieve in animals:

- Neck, back, leg and tail pain
- Jaw or TMJ problems
- Disc problems
- Arthritis
- Muscle spasms
- Nerve problems

The procedure can also relieve the pain caused by injuries from slips, falls and accidents; and the discomfort associated with surgery and dental procedures.

Both Wisconsin and Minnesota law allows chiropractors to perform adjustments on animals if they are able to first obtain a referral from a veterinarian. John Mundahl, D.V.M., of Hayward, Wisc., is one of the many vets who is happy to offer one if he thinks an adjustment will benefit the animal.

“I've made referrals for dogs, cats and horses,” says Mundahl. “My feeling is that if a simple adjustment will help improve the animal's quality of life by reducing pain, and do so without drugs, it's definitely an option we should pursue.”

When Juli Lynch came to Dr. Mundahl seeking help for her horse, he referred her to Gray Kimbrell, P.A., owner of Kimbrell Chiropractic in Minneapolis. Kimbrell has more than 20 years of experience as a rolfar and chiropractor. He started helping animals as well about two years ago for truly selfish reasons.

“My German shorthair pointer, Nicky, had developed a limp in her right front leg that did not respond to a course of conventional – and expensive – treatment. After just one chiropractic adjustment her gait improved. After two, Nicky was back to normal,” he says.

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Amazed by how well it had worked and with a little encouragement from Dena Jersild, D.V.M., who had treated Nicky initially, Kimbrell decided to pursue certification and licensing in animal chiropractic. Now as one of only nine licensed animal chiropractors in Minnesota, he is able to help his own dog, as well as other animals in pain. Kimbrell has experience adjusting horses, dogs and even cats.

Sandy Sheehan of Hayward, Wisc., shows horses through the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA), and relies on Kimbrell to keep her equine athletes in tip shop shape all year round. “Our horses actually will start to tell us when they need to be adjusted by way of how they perform and move. For example, not stopping hard, moving a little off balance when cantering, etc. When Gray comes to adjust them, our horses are quite willing to have him move their bodies through the manipulations, and they are quite relaxed when finished.”

Lynch suggests Kimbrell’s bedside manner has a lot to do with it. “He takes the time to really get to know the animals before he does any kind of work on them. They completely trust him because they know when he’s done doing what he has to do, they’ll feel better,” she says.

How do you know if chiropractic can help your animals? Here are some of the signs Kimbrell recommends people look for to make a determination:

- Decreased level of performance
- Muscle imbalance, spasms or atrophy
- Obscure lameness, uneven gait or stiffness
- Pelvic asymmetries

Symptoms specific to horses:

- Not taking leads, reduced impulsion, poor transitions
- Uncharacteristically crabby, or uncooperative
- Unexpected discomfort when a saddle is put on

If you suspect any of these problems and want to give animal chiropractic a try, contact Kimbrell to schedule a session. Both Minnesota and Wisconsin require a veterinary referral, so you will need the name of your veterinarian and his or her contact information handy when you call.

Before an adjustment, be prepared to discuss your animal’s health history and current symptoms. First visits typically take between 30 to 45 minutes. “Most animals respond well to chiropractic and are comfortable with the procedure as it is a gentle, non-invasive treatment,” says Kimbrell.

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He treats the majority of his animal patients at their own homes, but hopes to eventually open a clinic next door to his current practice for people on Chicago Avenue S., in Minneapolis. To learn more about the animal chiropractic services offered through the Kimbrell Chiropractic Health Center, log on to [www.kimbrellchiropractic.com](http://www.kimbrellchiropractic.com) or call 612-824-4788.

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About Rachel M. Anderson

Rachel is a freelance writer who lives in Minnetonka, Minn. She has written professionally for the Minneapolis Star Tribune and Tampa Tribune newspapers.