



# Spinal Manipulation / Chiropractic Care for Your Horse

**Chiropractic** is defined as the “location, analysis, and correction of vertebral subluxation complexes as related to the treatment and prevention of biomechanical dysfunction of the skeleton, especially the spine, and its effect on the entire nervous system.”

Chiropractic examinations tend to focus on the whole horse, specifically the spine and the nervous system, as compared to trying to identify a singular point of dysfunction. The spinal column is seen as the primary framework that helps the body to function without aches and pains. Thus, a misaligned spinal column may be responsible for a lack of flexibility of the neck and back as well as pinched nerves and painful spasms. Vertebrae are joined together to foster movement. Improper alignment — subluxation — inhibits neuron processing which leads to interference in joints and other structures. This leads to stiffness, pain, and other problems seen in equine locomotion. When an equine chiropractor identifies a subluxation, their goal is to correct the misalignment through adjustment — a quick short thrust along the plane of the joint. Chiropractic care centers on detecting abnormal motion of the individual vertebra and its effects on the surrounding tissues. Reduced mobility between two vertebral bodies can irritate the nerves exiting the spinal cord, leading to decreased nerve supply to the tissues. This altered nerve function causes problems such as pain, abnormal posture, uncoordinated movement, overloading of leg joints, and muscle changes.

## How is it Performed?

Adjustments performed on animals are similar to those performed on humans. Before performing a chiropractic adjustment, a physician will examine an animal’s gait, posture, and vertebrae. Chiropractic adjustments are always done with care and the main focus is on being gentle and painless. Much like humans, chiropractic therapies for animals are designed to relieve pressure in the spine, among other areas, to realign the body and allow it to heal itself. Whether an animal is agile or frail, chiropractic care may help reduce discomfort and promote normal muscle and skeletal motion and function. This may help aging pets who suffer from soreness, degenerative diseases, and limited mobility.

## Benefits of Chiropractic for Horses

Chiropractic has been a mainstay in the equine world, especially among sporthorses. The chiropractic techniques used focus on maximizing comfort while improving the overall function of the body. Animal chiropractic studies have shown that horses, many of whom suffer from back problems due to a combination of incorrect riding methods and inexperienced riders, can greatly benefit from basic chiropractic techniques.

Chiropractic manipulations have also shown a reduction in tension and over-extension in the backs of horses while improving symmetrical gate.

Some horses need an occasional adjustment, some more often.