

# CLIPPITY CLIPS



## Doctor's hands heal horses through chiropractic treatment

by Stacey Massey

Sore back? Loss of balance? Uneven gait? A chiropractor may be the answer to these problems - not only for humans but horses too. Chiropractic care is no longer just for humans. Its benefits can be reaped by everything from cats to horses.

Laura Frost of Frost Veterinary Services, a mobile veterinary service covering the Guelph, Flamborough, Burlington and Milton areas, is a licensed veterinarian also certified in animal chiropractic care. The majority of her chiropractic patients are from the equine species but she is frequented by dogs too.

Dr. Frost's chiropractic training makes her unique in her profession. She is one of only a dozen veterinarians and chiropractors in Ontario certified to perform chiropractic treatments on animals.

Though she never had first hand experience with animal chiropractic care she knew it was practised by many in the horse industry. Much to her horror it was often carried out without proper training and in extreme cases involved using such force as a two-by-four.

After graduating from the University of Guelph, Dr. Frost's skepticism of the chiropractic treat-

ment and her fear of self taught practitioners led her to the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA) in Illinois where she studied animal chiropractic over the course of two years.

"You have to have a solid foundation of the anatomy," Dr. Frost said. "I wanted to protect my clients from those who were self taught."

After completing a five module course focussing on anatomy, physiology, techniques, radiology and neurology complete with three case studies, Dr. Frost became certified. As she proceeded in her studies she found her skepticism quickly melting away.

"I found there really are some benefits," Dr. Frost said. It's a great option "if you want to get the most out of your horse. And it doesn't matter if it's a pleasure horse or a grand prix horse."

However, Dr. Frost said the majority of her equine patients are performance athletes, particularly those competing in dressage events where the horse's performance is judged on movement.

Equine chiropractic focuses on maintaining the health of the horse through the proper alignment of the spine. There are numerous reasons, not just back problems, to

turn to chiropractic care. It has been said that when a horse acts out it is not usually out of disobedience but because the horse is suffering or in pain.

Reasons that may suggest a visit to a chiropractor include lack of bending to one side; not being on the bit; inability or reluctance to work in a frame (round the back); tail wringing; grinding of the teeth; or lameness that has not been diagnosed by traditional tests.

After receiving an in-depth history on each potential patient Dr. Frost will meet with her patient. During the hour long session she assesses the patient's condition through physical, neurological and lameness tests.

Dr. Frost is the first to admit not every horse will benefit with chiropractic care.

"It's not for everyone," she said. She does not believe in treating an animal when there is nothing to be gained. "I've had some people come (for chiropractic treatment) and sent them away without an adjustment."

Though it's hard to imagine a single person performing chiropractic procedures on an animal weighing over 1000 pounds, Dr. Frost says it's not as difficult as people think.

"You're working on a specific bone and at a specific angle," she said. "You have to think force equals mass times acceleration. By increasing the acceleration of the

thrust you increase the force which is usually just with your hands and body."

Each joint can be assessed through one of two methods: static palpation for unsymmetrical muscles and motion palpation which focuses on the movement of each joint.

An adjustment is aimed at correcting a subluxation (misalignment). Thus restoring the nervous system to proper working order. It is aimed at eliminating the cause of the problem instead of just ridding the patient of symptoms.

Dr. Frost said some clients are convinced they see results almost immediately, but she advises clients to be patient.

"It (improvement) depends on the horse," Dr. Frost said. "Sometimes it's right away and sometimes it takes two or three treatments."

She said a typical schedule will require one visit every seven days for a month and then one visit every eight weeks.

Dr. Frost believes that the owner can also be of assistance in the recovery or improvement of the horse. By hiring a massage therapist or performing their

own massage on the horse.

"I think it (massage) helps maintain the adjustment longer," she said. "You have to retrain the muscles. It's almost like they (muscles) have a memory and that's why they go back."

"I also think it's just good for the relationship between the horse and the owner."

As a veterinarian and a general animal enthusiast, Dr. Frost believes in doing everything possible to keep animals happy and healthy. That means maintaining basic care such as the often neglected dentistry work.

"I figure if people are going to the extent of getting a chiropractor, they need to have the basics as well. It just makes sense."

Dr. Frost says chiropractic is not an alternative treatment, it must go hand in hand with tradi-

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Photos by Stacey Massey

Dr. Laura Frost demonstrates chiropractic techniques on Tipperay.

