Chiropractors for Animals
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Foreword

The Royal College of Chiropractors received its Royal Charter and title comparatively recently and takes its new status very seriously. Promoting quality, safety and excellence in chiropractic practice are important aspects of our work and this extends to those chiropractors who treat animals.

This booklet summarises our role as a Royal College with particular reference to our Animal Faculty which provides a register of chiropractors who treat animals.

I hope that by outlining how animal chiropractors are trained, how they work and how their practices fit in with the care provided by veterinary surgeons, the information in this booklet will help provide vets with the necessary confidence to refer to them.

Peter Dixon FRCC, President
The Royal College of Chiropractors
1. What is the Royal College of Chiropractors?

The Royal College of Chiropractors (RCC) is a Royal Chartered professional membership body and registered charity promoting quality, safety and professional excellence in chiropractic.

The RCC has over 2800 members worldwide, and the following objectives:

- to promote the art, science and practice of chiropractic
- to improve and maintain standards in the practice of chiropractic for the benefit of the public
- to promote awareness and understanding of chiropractic amongst medical practitioners and other healthcare professionals and the public
- to educate and train practitioners in the art, science and practice of chiropractic
- to advance the study of and research in chiropractic
2. What is the RCC’s Animal Faculty?

The RCC recognises a number of areas of special interest and, where these are partnered with formal postgraduate study and/or special knowledge and experience, Specialist Faculties have been established. The Animal Faculty is one of these Specialist Faculties.

In addition to fostering open inquiry and debate among practitioners, and encouraging further, relevant continuing professional development, the Animal Faculty aims to:

- Define the required competencies and standards of practice
- Provide a clear identity for registered chiropractors who treat animals
- Liaise with relevant Government departments and regulators to ensure a clear understanding of animal chiropractic
3. The Register of Animal Chiropractors

All Licentiates, Members and Fellows (‘members’) of the Royal College of Chiropractors’ Animal Faculty are:

- statutorily registered chiropractors and, thus, listed in the Chiropractic Register maintained by the General Chiropractic Council (GCC)*
- additionally qualified at postgraduate level to treat animals
- compliant with the competencies/standards of practice set by the RCC

Members have extended their GCC-approved chiropractic training (as required for the treatment of humans) with postgraduate training recognised by the Royal College of Chiropractors, and apply the same professionalism to the care of animals that they are required to apply to the care of humans.

These chiropractors are listed in the Register of Members of The Royal College of Chiropractors’ Animal Faculty which essentially comprises a voluntary register of animal chiropractors. The register is publicly available in the Animal Chiropractic area of the RCC website (www.rcc-uk.org)
4. Chiropractors’ qualifications for treating animals

Chiropractors currently undertake at least four years of training in human chiropractic studies in order to qualify at Masters-level and register with the General Chiropractic Council.

In order to treat animals, training in animal chiropractic is undertaken at Masters-level, or equivalent.

This training typically involves anatomy, physiology, neurology, osteology, arthrology, gait analysis and biomechanics. Advanced biomechanics and kinematics, from a chiropractic perspective, may follow.

*The GCC is a statutory body established by Parliament to regulate the chiropractic profession. It protects the health and safety of the public by ensuring high standards of practice in the chiropractic profession. The GCC states that “the title of ‘chiropractor’ is protected by law and it is a criminal offence for anyone to describe themselves as any sort of chiropractor without being registered with the GCC” ([http://www.gcc-uk.org/about-us/](http://www.gcc-uk.org/about-us/))
5. How does chiropractic care for animals work?

While chiropractors are primary contact practitioners able to work independently with human patients, legislation stipulates that animals may only be treated by a veterinary surgeon or someone authorised by a veterinary surgeon. Members of the RCC Animal Faculty adhere to this requirement, working under the authorisation of a veterinary surgeon at all times to ensure the safe treatment of the animal. When permission has been given, the chiropractor will:

- Work from information received from the veterinary surgeon
- Take a history from the owner regarding the animal
- Watch the animal move and analyse the gait
- Palpate the animal
- Make a working chiropractic assessment and formulate a care plan
- Explain to the owner how the treatment works and what they are about to do

The principle of chiropractic care is to mobilise and manipulate dysfunctional joints in order to restore, improve and optimise flexibility, symmetry, coordination, strength and balance. When achieved, this will improve function and performance in terms of reducing pain, relieving soft tissue spasms and asymmetries, increasing mechanical strength and stability and helping to restore nerve function.

Chiropractic care involves manual treatments which are usually done by hand; any equipment used is portable. Chiropractors usually visit larger animals at their yard where assessment and treatment can take place immediately, as appropriate.

Any condition outside the chiropractor’s remit is always referred back to the veterinary surgeon quickly. In this way, medical problems may be identified and treated more quickly than usually possible for referrals based on the owner’s knowledge.
6. How does chiropractic care fit with veterinary treatment?

Chiropractic care is a non-invasive adjunct to veterinary treatment for many musculoskeletal and post-surgical conditions and should be considered in the following instances:

**Crisis care**
- Musculoskeletal conditions where a non-invasive approach, alone, may be sufficient and for any animal where surgery is not appropriate
- Trauma where there is no obvious radiographic evidence of damage
- Neurological conditions where investigations are limited by financial constraints

**Maintenance care**
- For long-term neuro-musculoskeletal conditions, elderly animals and compensations for other injuries or after anaesthetic
- Regular check-ups are recommended to help maintain fitness and prevent avoidable injury

**Competition care**
- Where animals are involved in athletic activities, chiropractic care can address minor musculoskeletal problems that challenge performance

Most animal chiropractors are trained to treat mammals and birds, including farm animals, as well as many reptiles, but the majority of the patients they see are horses, dogs and cats. The animal chiropractor’s ability to treat the partnership between dog and handler, and horse and rider, is unique and particularly valuable.
7. Insurance

For their work with humans, all chiropractors are legally required to carry professional indemnity and liability insurance.

Chiropractors who treat animals have specific professional indemnity and liability insurance for this work.

Chiropractors are normally accepted by insurance companies that provide cover for animal treatments.

8. How do I find a chiropractor?

Animal chiropractors normally introduce themselves to all local veterinary practices.

Enquirers can be sure that those listed in the Register of Members of The Royal College of Chiropractors’ Animal Faculty are registered chiropractors who are additionally trained to treat animals.

To find an animal chiropractor in your area, please visit the Animal Chiropractic area of the Royal College of Chiropractors’ website at **www.rcc-uk.org**

Chiropractors are able to provide their General Chiropractic Council registration number, which may help with insurance claims.
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