

Not Just for Sore Backs

Chiropractic treatment can solve seemingly unrelated health issues.

BY CINDY MARO, DVM

Cassie, a spayed female Shepherd mix, was adopted by her owner from a local animal shelter in October of 1994 when she was about three months old. As her veterinarian through her first five years of life, I saw nothing out of the ordinary at her routine visits. I provide holistic care to my patients, combining my knowledge and training in conventional and alternative therapies.

In May 1998, Cassie came into my office with her first health care issue. Her owner complained that she was losing weight and acting anxious. Her mild separation anxiety had worsened, and she was becoming more clingy with her owner.

In my physical examination, I found that Cassie had some sensitivity to palpation of her back and hips. She also had some "fixed" areas, where a normal range of motion in the lower lumbar spine and pelvis was reduced. I recommended that we schedule another appointment so we could take x-rays, and possibly perform some spinal manipulation, depending on the x-ray findings. I also prescribed some Bach Flower



Today, Cassie is a healthy and active nine-year-old dog who benefits from occasional chiropractic treatments.

remedies that Cassie's owner could try for Cassie's separation anxiety.

Cassie's separation anxiety improved before her follow-up visit, and her owner decided to cancel the x-ray and adjustment appointment.

Health problems accumulate

In October 1998, Cassie had an emergency visit to my associate, who provides conventional veterinary care, for an anal gland rupture. My associate provided antibiotics and topical treatments to treat the rupture.

In February 1999, Cassie came in for a routine physical. At that point, her owner stated that Cassie's sensitivity to being touched around her pelvis and rectum was increasing. We suggested a glucosamine supplement, but did not perform any chiropractic adjustments.

Throughout 1999, Cassie had numerous visits to our office for abnormal stools and anal gland problems. Her stools would vary in consistency from runny diarrhea to loose bowel movements and then clear up after anti-diarrheals were prescribed.

Cassie's owner was still reluctant to have x-rays taken after a few bouts of diarrhea, but she did consent to having a medical work-up, including laboratory testing for hypothyroidism. It turned out that all Cassie's tests were normal, except for her thyroid. She was put on a thyroid replacement hormone in 1999 by my associate.

In 1998 and 1999 Cassie had a total of 12 appointments and numerous phone consultations between our veterinary staff and her owner. Her problems included diarrhea, colitis, vomiting, and anal gland impactions. All these were treated with conventional veterinary medications.

New symptoms, new tack

In June of 2000, Cassie started having urine leakage problems. Her owner would find wet spots on the bed or carpet after Cassie would get up.

Cassie's routine physical exam was nor-

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WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **If your dog has a chronic health issue, contact the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association to locate a certified animal chiropractor near you.**
- **Have your dog examined, with conventional veterinary tests including x-rays and laboratory analysis of your dog's blood and urine, preferably prior to chiropractic treatment.**
- **Keep your dog's chiropractor (and veterinarian, if these are different practitioners) apprised of any changes in your dog's physical and mental condition following treatment.**

mal, but her animal chiropractic evaluation was abnormal. Her thyroid level was regulated and all other urine and blood tests were normal. This time, I saw her for an exam and put her medical history together with my knowledge of her prior and current animal chiropractic evaluations.

When I explained that the conventional veterinary treatments for urinary leakage in spayed female dogs include frequent medications (two to three times daily) to increase the tone of the bladder sphincter or hormones, which can have negative side effects, her owner consented to my performing necessary adjustments to Cassie's spine.

I found Cassie had a subluxation of the fifth lumbar vertebrae. In addition, her sacral apex and the base of her sacral bone were also in need of adjustment.

Cassie's owner saw immediate results following Cassie's spinal adjustments. Cassie stopped having urinary leakage, and her long-term bowel and anal gland problems ceased. Everything was great for the two-plus years.

Now we know

Cassie made it until January 2003 before she required chiropractic care again. At that time, her owner recognized the signs right away as being related to Cassie's spine (and the spinal nerves which directly go to the bladder, muscles of the lower back, and anal glands). At that time, further spinal adjustments immediately corrected the urinary incontinence.

Now, when Cassie starts having leakage, her owner schedules an adjustment right away. To date, Cassie has not needed any medications like phenylpropranolamine or estrogens.

She has not even required herbs or homeopathic remedies, because her adjustments have successfully stopped the incontinence each time.

Cassie's case is interesting, because it shows some of the possible problems that can be directly linked to the vertebrae and the spinal nerves. Cassie's conditions never evolved to the point where she showed typical spinal pain or lameness signs to her owner or the veterinarians who treated her.

The reason a pet can have a problem



Dr. Cindy Maro palpates and adjusts Cassie's spine as a treatment for urinary incontinence. Conventional veterinary care for this condition typically consists of medications and/or hormone therapy.

which relates to the spine and its health without showing gait or lameness signs is that the nerves which exit the spine send branches to every internal organ in the body. All those nerves can be affected by subtle spinal subluxations and change the signals they relay to and from the muscles and organs without any outward signs from the pet. Without specific training in animal spinal adjusting or animal chiropractic, a veterinarian would have no way of knowing and remedying the following situations which

occurred for Cassie over a five-year period.

It is important to note that medical testing, urinalysis, and x-rays should be a part of every patient's care, ideally prior to animal chiropractic care.

Unfortunately, before I became aware of the AVCA (American Veterinary Chiropractic Association) and was trained in animal chiropractic care, I performed the typical medical work-up and stopped there. I had no knowledge of any other way of treating pets, even though I saw a chiropractor for my own healthcare. I am certain I let many pets walk out of my office with correctable subluxations. I consider myself blessed by the knowledge and ability to help my patients by providing increased comfort, function, and a drug-free remedy for many of their healthcare issues. 🐾

Cindy Maro, DVM, attended the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine and practices holistic veterinary care in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh. Dr. Maro is a certified member of the AVCA, as well as the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society, American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture, and the American Veterinary Medical Association. You can find her contact information and that of other members of the AVCA at avcadoctors.com.

What is a Certified Veterinary Chiropractor?

The American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA) is an organization that unites members of the veterinary and chiropractic professions for the advancement of animal chiropractic care. The organization sets standards for educational programs, certification of trained doctors, and provides the public with ways to find adequately trained doctors to help their pets.

Licensed doctors of chiropractic and licensed doctors of veterinary medicine who have passed AVCA-approved postgraduate programs in animal chiropractic are eligible to sit for the AVCA Board Examinations.

In order to become AVCA-certified in animal chiropractic, a graduate from one of the approved programs must pass both written and practical examinations prepared by the AVCA.

After treating thousands of pet patients, I believe all pets should receive the benefit of an annual chiropractic evaluation and needed adjustments. For aging, previously

injured, and athletic pets, the frequency may need to be increased.

Find a certified, qualified practitioner near you and schedule your pet's appointment.

October and November are AVCA Animal Chiropractic Awareness Months. A certified member of the AVCA will be glad to speak to your dog organization or club about the many benefits of chiropractic for animals.

For more information about animal chiropractic, see the AVCA's Web site at animalchiropractic.org. For listings of certified veterinary chiropractors near you, see avcadoctors.com. The AVCA can also be reached at (918) 784-2231.

