

Oh, my aching back.

Chiropractic Adjustments Can Relieve the Pain in Dogs.

— by Pamela S. Hogle



Pamela traveled out West this summer with her Golden Retriever, Jana. Jana, shown here shooing away a turkey, full speed ahead, appears to be doing much better since her chiropractic adjustments.

It all started with a visit to Marla, the pet psychic. My normally exuberant companion, **Jana**, a 4-year-old Golden Retriever, wasn't playing as hard as usual, and refused to join other dogs at playtime. She wasn't exhibiting obvious signs of pain or even discomfort, so I chalked it up to jealousy, or perhaps impatience with the needy insistence of the much-younger puppies who shared our office.

Then, one Saturday afternoon, a group of friends — and our dogs — met Marla. We each had a private consultation. Marla's first comment was that Jana was experiencing back pain, particularly in the lumbar region, and needed a chiropractic adjustment. Hmmm.

Never having been to a chiropractor myself, I was intrigued. It makes sense that services like this exist for dogs — our pets really are part of the family, and we want their lives to be happy, healthy, and pain-free. Many of us take our pets on vacation with us and buy

them birthday presents, so it follows that we'd treat their illnesses, aches, and pains as we'd treat our own. The veterinary field has embraced this challenge, offering many of the same options for pets that people can obtain for themselves — including alternative therapies such as chiropractic care.

In our consultation, Marla said some other things that she wouldn't have known just by looking at Jana and me. For example, without knowing where I worked, she said that Jana was jealous and anxious on account of the other dogs in our office. My mystified friends had similar experiences in their meetings with Marla.

But, still. A natural skeptic, I was not about to track down a doggy chiropractor based solely on the advice of Marla the pet psychic.

Then, a couple of weeks later, in a Frisbee dog seminar we attended, the trainer said the same thing — Jana had back pain and needed a chiropractic adjustment. This trainer is not only a world champion Frisbee dog trainer; she also has studied canine chiropractic and adjusts her own dogs, so her advice carried a lot of weight with me.

Since the seminar was just days before our move to Florida, I resolved to find someone who could help Jana once we got to St. Petersburg. We settled into our new home: A third-floor condo. When Jana balked at going down the stairs and hesitated before jumping into the car, it became clear that something was really wrong. I started looking for a chiropractor.

Through the internet and queries at upscale pet food stores, I located a board certified specialist in canine and equine chiropractic, Dr. Patricia Jamison, and scheduled a consultation.

Still a little skeptical, though, I asked Jana's new personal physician, Dr. Jamie Barclay, for suggestions on treating Jana's back pain. She said we could medicate, but that she likes to recommend that people try acupuncture or chiropractic first. If that doesn't help, we can always put her on anti-inflammatory or pain relief medication, Dr. Barclay added.

Dr. Barclay said she became an advocate of integrating non-traditional therapies such as chiropractic or acupuncture into a dog's treatment when a severely arthritic basset hound in her care was able to stop taking steroids and walk almost pain-free after being treated with acupuncture.

Fully reassured, we trekked up to Tampa to meet Dr. Jamison, whom we both took to immediately. A true animal lover who says of her three dogs that they are "pretty much our children," Dr. Jamison practiced chiropractic on humans for 20 years before studying canine and equine chiropractic and becoming certified through the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA).

Dr. Jamison found Jana's trouble spots. Yes, she had pain in her lumbar region and at the base of her tail; and she was experiencing some stiffness in her neck. Dr. Jamison uses a few tools in addition to physical manipulation to adjust a dog's spine, one that creates a sort of static field, one that clicks... some of the adjustments sounded painful. Once or twice, Jana reacted with a surprised look, and once, a raised lip. Still, she seemed to feel better immediately and forgave Dr. Jamison quickly (the yummy treats Dr. Jamison provided helped, no doubt!).

Dr. Jamison explained that pain or stiffness comes from what is called a subluxation or fixation in the spine or a joint, a loss of mobility. The adjustment restores the mobility and reduces the pain. When they are adjusted, most patients — canine or human — can feel improvement right away, probably within 24 hours.

The adjustment itself is not usually painful for most humans, Dr. Jamison says, more like a needle-stick — a brief jolt. As for dogs, "I don't know that it's really painful for them. They can tolerate pain much better than people," Jamison said. The dog's reaction — a quick look or lifting the lip — is more likely a sign of apprehension than of pain because "they don't know what I'm doing to them," she added.

After each adjustment, Dr. Jamison waits for the dog to reflexively lick — a sign, she says, that the dog feels better. The lick is a small motion, almost a tongue-flick, that occurs within a few seconds of a successful adjustment. No lick? She tries again. Jana licked.

The lick reflex, Dr. Jamison explained, is an immediate neurological response to the release of endorphins. This response is seen in dogs, horses, and other animals and is similar to a verbal "wow" or other reaction in people. It is not a conscious or purposeful movement, and differs from an anxious or appeasing lick. If the lick is delayed by more than about five seconds, Jamison said, it is probably a different signal.

The true results of Jana's adjustment became clear over the next days. *See Oh, my aching back, continued on page 89*



Pet Food Warehouse

Different than other pet stores,
we are a department store for your family pet.

We are an adoption center for cats from Save Our Strays and have been for more than 8 years.

We also have a fish department with tropical and marine fish.

Check out the largest single independent pet store in the bay area!



family owned and operated

727-521-6191

Ask your friends where they shop!

open 7 days

6155 18th Street N.

62nd Avenue N.

St. Petersburg, FL 33714

www.petfoodwhse.com

Oh, my aching back - continued from page 65

Jana was more willing to walk down stairs and get into the car. When we got to Dr. Jamison's office for our second appointment a couple of weeks later, Jana perked up as soon as we entered the parking lot and she bounded over to greet Dr. Jamison warmly. Since Jana is normally fairly reserved with people, I took this as a sign that she knew Dr. Jamison had helped her feel better.

Chiropractic adjustments are helpful for athletic dogs as well as dogs experiencing pain from an injury or disease. But not just anyone can adjust your dog: A veterinarian or chiropractor must meet rigorous standards to become licensed through the AVCA. The program is a joint effort of veterinarians and (human) chiropractors with narrowly focused coursework. Students who are already chiropractors focus on learning the medical side, Jamison explained, so they will understand pathologies and contra-indications to treatment — when an adjustment would be harmful to a dog, for example; while veterinarians learn the chiropractic side. The initial coursework is only the beginning: Students must pass a tough licensing exam and complete an internship to become licensed; then, continuing education courses are required.

All students study both equine and canine chiropractic. The angles and planes of dogs' and horses' bodies are completely different — from humans and from each other. However, regardless of a dog's size or breed, all dog spines are basically the same shape, Dr. Jamison explained.

Why go through all of this extra training? Dr. Jamison first thought about veterinary chiropractic when her dog, Amy, was injured. Amy and her daughter were walking on a tandem leash and the daughter lunged suddenly, jerking Amy's neck. Two days later, Amy was screaming in pain and couldn't put any weight on her right front leg, Dr. Jamison said.

"I took her to a vet I knew who did acupuncture, but he looked at her and said, this dog needs her neck adjusted, she doesn't need acupuncture. He adjusted her, and she screamed in pain, but within five minutes, she was putting weight on her leg. After a few adjustments, she was fine." Jamison continued.

"That made a believer out of me," Jamison said, adding that she loves knowing she can help animals who are in pain. She entered the AVCA course when another of her dogs was in pain from a degenerative spinal disease and she was unable to find anyone in the area who practiced canine chiropractic.

There still are not many, but, for us, locating a canine chiropractor was worth the effort. After a few adjustments, the exuberant, playful Jana was back. Jana now bounds through the waves at the dog beach; wrestles with her young boyfriend, *Wylie*, a large Shepherd; and rolls luxuriantly in the grass every chance she gets. 🐾

Dr. Jamison can be reached at 813-787-0194
mypetschiropractor.com

Dr. Barclay practices at the Northeast Animal Hospital
1401 4th Street North, St. Petersburg, 727-822-8501
northeastanimalhospital.com



Offering A New Alternative for the Health of Your Pet.

Dr. Shawna Green develops a treatment plan that is catered specifically for each patient. She offers a wide range of veterinary services, including:

- Diagnostic procedures
- In-house testing and use of external labs
- A well-stocked pharmacy
- In-hospital surgery suite
- In-house x-ray capabilities
- Closely supervised hospitalization areas

ACUPUNCTURE WHIRLPOOL THERAPY

Incorporating diet and acupuncture

GROOMING

Full-service grooming including ear-cleaning, nail clipping, flea and tick treatment.



11141 US Highway 19 North – Clearwater, Florida 33764
www.medriveranimal.com – 727.299.9029

EVERY DOG DESERVES...



to
Look & Feel
This Good.

With grooming careers spanning two decades, nobody knows doggie hair care like Peggy and Beth.

Call them at 727.577.3500.

HAIR of the DOG

9049 4th Street N., St. Petersburg www.thehairofthedoggrooming.com

