

Dear Dr. Wise,

While at a horse show, I was approached by a horse chiropractor. Is there such a professional?

Equine chiropractor is a legitimate profession. The American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA) certifies veterinarians in chiropractics through an eight-week course. The practice of chiropractics is a form of holistic medicine with its basis in adjusting the musculoskeletal system, including the spinal column, to improve its relationship between the nervous system and biomechanics of movement. The point of adjusting the spine is to any relieve pain that may be causing a lameness or unsoundness or to alleviate an asymmetry in spinal column.

Because chiropractors are manipulating the spinal column and other areas of the musculoskeletal system, it is important that the professional is properly trained in anatomy, physiology, and actual techniques for adjustments. The AVCA certifies doctors of veterinary medicine (DVM) or doctors of chiropractic (DC) who complete the appropriate coursework. In order to legally practice on animals, a veterinarian needs to be performing the adjustment or a veterinarian needs to be supervising the person performing the adjustment. It is best to have a chiropractic adjustment performed by a licensed DVM who is certified by the AVCA. Many veterinarians may not be willing to be responsible for the actions of a DC who is certified by the AVCA who may be adjusting their client's animals. It is important to know the credentials of anyone performing a chiropractic adjustment on your animals because many lay people call themselves equine chiropractors and have not had any proper training.

Chiropractics can be an important adjunct to regular veterinary care to maintain the health and soundness of your horse if it is performed by the appropriate professional. If you have questions whether your horse needs a chiropractic adjustment, contact your regular veterinarian for a physical examination. Your regular veterinarian may perform the adjustment if they are AVCA certified or they may refer you to another AVCA certified veterinarian if an adjustment is needed.