

Finding an Equine Chiropractor

A pain-free guide to choosing a reputable equine practitioner.

By Amber Heintzberger

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Chiropractic is a popular treatment for equine athletes, but if you have never tried it before, choosing a reputable equine practitioner may be difficult. To make things more complicated, you have two options to choose from: a veterinarian or a lay chiropractor, which includes both licensed human chiropractors and strictly equine chiropractors.

Jeff Moore of Joseph, Ore., specializes in integrated bodywork for horses, including massage and chiropractic. His approach views the entire patient—including its physical, mental and emotional environment—as an intricate network of interconnected energies that contribute to the health of the horse. He offers some tips for choosing a practitioner that is right for you and your horse.

Unfortunately, finding an equine chiropractor is not as simple as picking up the phone book or Googling “Equine Chiropractic.” Moore explains that an existing comprehensive database of equine chiropractors isn’t available. The American Veterinary Chiropractic Association certifies existing vets to do chiropractic after an eight-week course, but there is no licensing body specifically for equine chiropractors. “That is a problem because there can be some very dangerous people posing as chiropractors,” Moore warns, adding, “but because of word of mouth, they don’t usually last.”

He recommends talking to a range of different horse people in and out of your circle of friends, making sure to include people who are experienced horsemen and competitors.

“Word of mouth is a good way to go if you know who to ask,” Moore says. “Knowledgeable, sensible horsemen are a good source. The problem comes from people who don’t really understand their horses to begin with, who get taken in by slick-talking practitioners who aren’t really that effective.”

Having the opportunity to ask a potential chiropractor a couple of questions and deciding if he or she would be the right person to work on your horse would be nice, but Moore cautions you must be sure you understand chiropractic well enough to evaluate the answers, since they usually aren’t cut and dried.

He does, however, offer a few suggestions: “The first question would be, ‘Do you use sedation?’” Moore says this is a red flag. “It is impossible to get any feedback from a horse that is sedated and very easy to cause more damage from over-adjusting. The second question would be to have the practitioner explain what he does. If he talks about ‘popping them back in’ or ‘getting them back in line’ and he doesn’t work with muscle tension and mental tension, I would be wary.” Moore also suggests asking if the chiropractor checks saddle fit and how the shoeing affects the horse, and whether he or she considers the rider’s chiropractic and bodywork issues, noting, “The answers to just those questions could fill a book.”

According to Moore, there are a couple of things to consider where the individual horse is concerned, so once you find someone you like and have your horse treated, pay attention to the results. “Does the horse move better, more freely and with less pain? Also, the reaction of the horse to the session is important to the long term effectiveness of the treatment,” Moore says. “If the horse stays tense or becomes more tense as the treatment goes on, that particular practitioner is not giving the maximum benefit to the horse.”

For more information about Equine Chiropractor Jeff Moore, visit his website at www.equinerehab.com.