

Special Report. Chiropractic Care For Dogs

A Paralysed Dachshund Case Study



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About the Authors:

This book has been carefully prepared, researched and edited by a team of canine information experts. Our authors are, first and foremost, passionate about dogs and share a mutual satisfaction in assisting people who are experiencing problems with their pets. Our works have been read by more than 12 million pet owners globally.

Chiropractic Care For Dogs

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Chiropractic care for animals works in much the same way as it does for humans. To explain this a bit further, a short Neurology 101 lesson is warranted.

The central nervous system is comprised of the brain which is protected by the skull, and the spinal cord which is protected by the vertebrae of the spinal column. When the brain wants to talk to the body to direct its actions, functions, hormone productions and so on, it sends a message to its intended recipient, whether it be an organ, a muscle, or a gland, through the spinal cord. At each level of the spine, there is a pair of spinal nerves (left and right, 31 pairs in the human spine), and these have dedicated areas that they deliver the messages to.

For example, if the brain needs to tell the stomach to produce a little more HCL for digestion, it will send a message to be delivered to the spinal nerves at the mid back level (6th and 7th thoracic), and the spinal nerves will in turn take the message to its intended organ, the stomach. That organ will then produce the appropriate response.

The spinal cord and vertebral column are like a breaker box if you will, and the message from the brain is like the electricity. If one of the breakers (vertebrae) in the spine is off or even partially off, it will prevent the electricity (message from the brain) from making it to its destination. In chiropractic terms, this is known as a subluxation. As a chiropractor, my job is to detect where the breakers are off and cutting off the electricity, and flip them back to the 'on' position. In both humans and animals, finding subluxations is done with a thorough chiropractic examination, review of radiographs, orthopedic tests, and neurological examination.

Upon starting my fourth year in my animal chiropractic practice, I received a call from an owner who was frantic; her beloved Dachshund was paralyzed in the lower back and both hind legs. He hadn't suffered any injuries that she knew of, and veterinarians at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis had already told her the grim report, surgery was needed if the little guy was to have a chance.

Unfortunately, this was a surgery that they couldn't afford, so the owners were devastated and desperate. Although my schedule was completely full that day, I agreed to stay after hours to see if I could help, I honestly didn't know that I could. When I walked out of my treatment room after my last patient that day, I saw a couple, both in tears, holding a tiny miniature dachshund in a blanket with such pity in his eyes, my heart just broke. Right there I decided that, although I didn't know if I could help, I had to try, so I introduced myself and asked his name. "Jazzy" looked at me with such pleading that I said I would do everything I could to help, and I secretly hoped that my "everything" would be enough. Here is their story:

*October 2010 - "My husband and I have used chiropractic all of our lives, but never in my wildest dreams would I have thought I would ever take my dog to one.

We have a miniature dachshund, named Jazzy, who we got in 2004 at just 8 weeks old. Just as a coincidence, he turns 6 years old today! What a joy this little guy has been to our lives.

In October 2008, I came home from work late at night and my husband was up with Jazzy. As soon as I came in the house he told me that something was wrong. He said that Jazzy had been walking funny, kind of drunk, weaving and wobbling from side to side. We

sat there for about half an hour trying to watch him and as time went by, he got worse and worse. In no time, he started whining, and just dragging his entire back end on the floor. We were frantic, and couldn't imagine what could be going on. By this time it was after midnight and we didn't know what to do.

My husband called several veterinarians in the phone book and tried to reach one at emergency numbers they offered on their machines. We did reach one and after explaining the situation to him, he said maybe we should contact the University of Minnesota because it sounded like he may need surgery for his back. That night we did call the University, and they explained that with Dachshunds it's common that their back goes out, and if we needed to do surgery on him it would run us about \$5000! Then we were sick...like most people we don't have \$5000 to spend on surgery for our dog. We had no idea what to do.



Dr. Josee showing some of her techniques.

We stayed up with him all night and just cried watching him suffer and get worse and worse. As soon as we could in the morning, we took him to Pine City to the vet there. They examined him right away, took blood, did x-rays of his back, and put an IV in and told us they would have to keep him overnight to monitor him. It was awful to leave him there; both of us were extremely worried about him. The next day we went back and the doctor told us that he would need back surgery...again, we were sick. All we could do was taking him home and pray. We brought him home, and had to get little doggie diapers for him to wear because he was completely paralyzed from the middle of his back down to his feet. He had no control at all over his bowels. We would try to take him out to go to the bathroom and he would just drag his back end all over the yard. It was the saddest thing to see. All we could do is cry and pray that God would heal him.

The next day we got a phone call from the Dr. in Pine City who told us that he knew of a chiropractor who worked on animals and has had quite a bit of success helping them. He suggested that we call her and set up an appointment. We called immediately and were told to bring him to a clinic about 50 miles away where she would be that day. They said that she would stay after all her appointments were finished so that she could see Jazzy! What a blessing! Finally some hope. We drove him there and waited in the waiting room for her to call us in. When we went into the examining room, we met Dr. Josée Gerard, who turned out to be the miracle that we had prayed for."

Upon examining Jazzy, I clearly saw that he no longer had any control or use of his back legs, he just dragged himself around by his front legs. He had also lost control over his bowel and bladder. Because of their long back and short legs, Dachshunds are known to have back issues and injury. (Editor's note - selective breeding to create dogs with ever more disproportionate dimensions contributes to this issue. When breeders advise you not to let your dog go down the stairs by itself, in case it jumps from the last step, you know there is a problem. Dogs should be able to jump without risking paralysis.) This was the worst case I had ever seen, complete paralysis from the low back all the way down to the legs. I found several "subluxations" in the lower back where the vertebrae of the spine were out of place; they were putting so much pressure on the nerves that the electricity was not flowing to the associated organs, cells, muscles, thereby causing the paralysis. The spinal nerves that come out of the lower back control many things, but most of all the bladder, the rectum, and the back legs.

I told the owners that if chiropractic treatments would help, we would see some change after 3 adjustments, if we saw nothing at all, it may be too late. So I asked if they were willing to give that a try, and even though they drove a great distance to come see me, and it meant that they would have to repeat their drive at least twice more, they emphatically agreed!

After the exam, I proceeded to give Jazzy his first adjustment. I'll always remember that he seemed to understand that I was trying to help him, not hurt him. I sent him and his owners home along with a list of "what to expect after the first adjustment" effects that Jazzy might experience. The most prominent effect was that Jazzy would be very tired and likely sleep a lot in the 24-48 hours that followed the adjustment. This is a very normal response if we consider that when I adjusted his spine and turned the breaker back to "on", the electricity however minute at first, would start to flow again in his body.

When this happens, the body immediately goes about repairing itself as best as it can, and since that's extremely hard work, it's normal that the animal (or even human) will sleep while this is going on. Their continued testimonial:

"She had a couple of people in there that were students of chiropractic and were there to observe what she was doing. She set Jazzy up on the table and started hearing our story and looking at his back. She put him down on the floor and saw the way that he was dragging his back end, and then put him back on the table and started to adjust him. I was a little surprised to see the way she was adjusting him, because it looked to me like it wasn't much of an adjustment at all. She pushed on a few places in his back, here and there, and then she was done. I thought to myself...that's it? I was a little skeptical at the time that just a few pushes on his back was going to fix the problem, but I remained hopeful. We had no other choice.

She told us to take him home and watch him...wait 2 days and then bring him down to Lino Lakes to her other office so she can adjust him again. We did just that and she adjusted him again. She then told us to wait a few more days and then bring him down again for another one. After the third visit with Dr. Josée we brought him home and later in the day took him outside to go potty. While he was in the yard, I watched as he pulled himself up off the grass and tried to walk on his back legs! I started crying like a baby. I knew that I had just witnessed a miracle. There is no way that he could have done that without those few adjustments."

So there we had it, a significant change after the third adjustment! That was the sign that we had been looking for. It was the moment when I realized that chiropractic treatment was not too late for Jazzy, that he was responding, and that we could move forward with further treatment. With visits 4 and 5, jazzy kept exhibiting very positive changes and was becoming his old self again, most notably, the light and fire in his eyes had come back, he was feeling strong again!

Then one day, on Jazzy's sixth visit, my heart stopped when I saw that his owners were carrying him in their arms all wrapped up in a blanket again. I thought, "Oh no, what happened..." I anxiously waited for them to say something, but instead, they gingerly lowered Jazzy to the ground. I stared in utmost amazement as he ran over to me with such excitement, I nearly cried. Jazzy was walking on his own again!!

*As time went by, we kept taking him to Dr. Josée on a regular basis, and every time he got stronger and stronger. In no time he was walking again, and the diapers were gone.

It has now been 2 years since this happened and you would never know that he was ever paralyzed. He can run like you wouldn't believe. Dr. Josée has since moved far away from us, but gave us the name of Dr. Lavallie to continue Jazzy's care. We still take him for regular maintenance adjustments to keep him in good health.

We have made changes in that we don't allow Jazzy to jump off furniture anymore, and we carry him up and down the stairs. We do everything we can to ensure that he won't injure his back again.

We are forever grateful for the care that Dr. Josée gave to Jazzy, and we thank God everyday for hearing our prayers and helping our little puppy live to be 6 years."

Dr. Josée Gerard has been working in the chiropractic field since 1989. She began her career as an assistant, then became an office manager for several chiropractic clinics. Her desire to learn more about her field led her to become a Doctor of Chiropractic herself, graduating from Northwestern College of Chiropractic in Bloomington, Minnesota in 2001.

In 2005, she earned her post-graduate certification in Animal Chiropractic with Healing Oasis in Sturtevant, Wisconsin. For several years, Dr. Gerard had two practices, one for human patients and another for animal patients. Recently, she made the decision to retire from human practice in order to devote herself full time to working with animals. She now owns and runs her practice, Kiro4Pets, in Hawkesbury, Ontario, Canada, where owners and patients willingly drive up to 2 hours each way for treatment, as she is one of very few who are specially trained and certified in her field. Her website is www.kiro4pets.com.