



**BARNYARD  
CHIROPRACTIC**

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March 30, 2025

To: Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Re: **LD 1220**, An Act to Allow Certified Animal Chiropractors Direct Access to Caring for Domestic Animals in Maine

Thank you to Senator Bailey, Representative Gramlich, and members of the HCIFS committee for allowing me to speak with you remotely today. My name is Dr. Natalia LaVallie, and I am an AVCA-certified animal chiropractor who has been practicing in Illinois for over 11 years. I grew up in Norway, Maine and am moving back next year with my husband Dr. Connor LaVallie. I intend to relocate my successful mobile animal practice, Barnyard Chiropractic.

I am testifying in support of LD 1220, which would establish clear licensing and certification requirements for animal chiropractors and grant domestic animals direct access to chiropractic care in Maine. As an advocate for animal health and well-being, I firmly believe that enacting this bill is necessary to clarify the scope of practice for qualified practitioners, protect animals, and ensure professional accountability.

The absence of clear legislation on animal chiropractic poses serious risks to animals and their owners. Without defined education, training, and certification standards, unqualified individuals may attempt adjustments, potentially causing harm. Chiropractic care requires specialized knowledge of animal anatomy and biomechanics. When performed correctly, it is extremely safe. Unregulated practice can be harmful. In Illinois, where laws are similarly vague, I've witnessed such harm firsthand, with no recourse against untrained practitioners.

This bill would also give animals direct access to quality chiropractic care without necessarily involving a veterinarian. The direct access component is as equally important as setting professional standards because vague or restrictive regulations place an undue burden on both owners and veterinarians and delay care that could provide relief. This bill would remove unnecessary barriers by granting direct access to qualified animal chiropractors while still maintaining high standards of care and professional oversight.

In Illinois, chiropractic physicians need a veterinarian's referral to treat animals, but vets lack training to identify when care is needed, often relying on pain—a late-stage symptom animals hide—delaying treatment. This also shifts liability to vets who are rarely present. Much like the direct access bill for human-based chiropractors, we require the same for animal chiropractic. Manifested barriers regarding politics, professional turf, and inter-professional fighting have no place in patient-centered care.

Opponents to this bill will cite patient safety, and provided in my testimony is a statement from a major malpractice carrier showing that they have not had a *single* claim regarding animal chiropractic, only satisfied owners.

Statistics in my testimony highlight a veterinarian shortage, especially in large animal care, affecting rural areas like upstate Maine first. Burnout, retirements, and retention issues further reduce workforce size, impacting care availability and quality.

Veterinarians and animals alike only stand to benefit from LD 1220 because we are trained to know when to refer – we can act as another valuable portal of entry, improving patient outcomes and increasing their bottom line.

I encourage you to support LD 1220.



**ChiroSecure**<sup>TM</sup>  
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To whom it may concern,

I would like to respond to your inquiry of malpractice claims that we have received pertaining to chiropractors engaging in animal adjusting with the proper training.

To date, we have not experienced any claims specifically related to animal adjusting.

I hope this is helpful.

Sincerely,

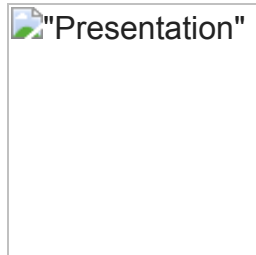
Dr. Stu Hoffman, Pres. ChiroSecure

# Integrative Healthcare – Adopting a Balanced Approach

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[vetcompendium.org/integrative-healthcare-adopting-a-balanced-approach](https://vetcompendium.org/integrative-healthcare-adopting-a-balanced-approach)

January 8, 2025



By Kevin K. Haussler, DVM, DC, PhD, DACVSMR

As the field of veterinary medicine continues to evolve, the options for caring for animals have expanded significantly. Owners and trainers have access to both traditional and integrative veterinary care to address the animal's overall healthcare needs. While these healthcare systems share the common goal of improving animal health, they often differ in methodology, philosophy, and application.

## What is traditional veterinary care?

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Traditional veterinary care focuses on diagnosing and treating diseases using evidence-based practices. This approach includes medicine, surgery, critical care, and other conventional techniques. Key features include:

- **Diagnosis:** Relies on advanced diagnostic tools such as blood tests and diagnostic imaging (X-rays, ultrasound, MRI).
- **Treatment:** Includes pharmaceuticals, surgery, and medical procedures to manage disease conditions. Unfortunately, some medications and invasive procedures may produce significant adverse effects.
- **Acute and emergency care:** Essential for addressing life-threatening situations like injuries, infections, or organ failure. Critical care stabilizes animals in emergencies and ensures immediate intervention.
- **Evidence-based medicine:** Many medical and surgical procedures are backed by extensive scientific research and clinical trials.
- **Preventive care:** Focuses on early detection of illness to improve outcomes. Vaccinations, parasite control, and routine check-ups form the foundation of disease prevention.
- **Limitations:** The focus is often on treating disease rather than promoting health and overall well-being. If a specific diagnosis for a disease process is not attainable, then treatment options are often limited. Owners may be told to “come back when things get worse”.

## What is integrative veterinary care?

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Integrative veterinary care combines traditional veterinary medicine with evidence-based complementary therapies to address the overall well-being of animals. The intent is to address the animal as a whole by considering the physical, emotional, and environmental factors that might affect its health. Integrative veterinary medicine can be particularly beneficial in managing chronic or complex conditions, enhancing recovery, and improving quality of life. This approach recognizes that a single treatment modality may not be effective in all cases and aims to provide individualized care tailored to each animal's unique needs.

Key indications include:

- **Pain management:** For chronic conditions, e.g., osteoarthritis, soft tissue injuries, neuropathic pain, therapies such as acupuncture, physical therapy, and chiropractic care can reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Rehabilitation:** After surgery or trauma, therapeutic exercises, laser therapy, and gentle joint or soft tissue mobilization can improve overall mobility, strength, and aid in recovery.
- **Chronic illness:** Conditions such as kidney disease, cancer, or gastrointestinal disorders may benefit from dietary modifications, herbal medicine, or nutritional supplements to support organ function and overall vitality.
- **Behavioral disorders:** Stress-reducing techniques, aromatherapy, and environmental enrichment can help manage anxiety, phobias, and behavioral issues.
- **Preventive care:** By focusing on balanced nutrition, regular exercise, and wellness evaluations, integrative care helps maintain optimal health and prevent future issues.
- **Age-related concerns:** Geriatric animals often benefit from a combination of therapies to manage pain, weakness, or coordination, and maintain overall vitality.

It follows that integrative veterinary care has multiple advantages:

- **Comprehensive approach:** Addresses not only the clinical signs but also strives to identify and address the root cause of health issues.
- **Chronic disease:** Recognizes that chronic conditions often require a multimodal approach. Rarely is a single therapy effective for managing the complex issues associated with chronic pain and associated compensatory issues.
- **Personalized care:** Can be tailored to an individual animal's unique needs, considering factors such as age, athletic discipline, and underlying health issues.
- **Reduced dependency on pharmaceuticals:** Can minimize the need for medication, reducing potential side effects.
- **Enhanced quality of life:** Often improves an animal's overall well-being, not just their immediate health concerns.
- **Minimally invasive:** Many therapies are non-invasive and carry fewer side effects compared to pharmaceuticals or surgeries.

- **Preventive care:** By addressing clinical signs early in the disease process, can prevent the development of more severe issues.
- **Supportive care:** Even in cases of incurable diseases, can enhance comfort and well-being. Many integrative therapies can be used in aging or debilitated pets and end-of-life or hospice settings to help support an animal and their owner.
- **Promotes owner involvement:** Often involves lifestyle and dietary changes that engage owners in their pet's wellness.

However, while integrative care is often beneficial, certain conditions or situations may make this approach difficult or inappropriate:

- **Cost:** Some therapies may be costly, especially when used alongside traditional veterinary care.
- **Accessibility:** Some forms of therapy are not widely available, depending on the location, facilities and equipment, support staff, and expertise of practitioners.
- **Time commitment:** Many integrative therapies often require longer or more frequent sessions, which may not be feasible for all pet owners. Results may take longer compared to conventional treatments.
- **Availability of trained practitioners:** Access to veterinarians with advanced education and certifications or practitioners with special interest and training in integrative therapies may be limited in certain areas.
- **Potential risks of non-regulated therapies:** When not administered by qualified professionals, some therapies can cause harm.
- **Mismanagement of risks:** Integrative care should complement, not replace, conventional treatments for the diagnosis and management of urgent or life-threatening conditions. If used as a sole treatment for serious conditions, it can delay critical interventions, potentially harming the animal.
- **Limited scientific evidence:** While some therapies are well-supported by research, others rely heavily on anecdotal evidence and may lead to skepticism in the traditional veterinary community.

Some forms of integrative care may not be suitable for every situation or every animal. Contraindications may include:

- **Emergency conditions:** Life-threatening conditions such as fractures, acute infections, severe trauma, or emergency medical conditions require immediate conventional intervention.
- **Unqualified or poorly trained practitioners:** It is crucial to seek integrative care from licensed veterinarians or certified practitioners to avoid risks associated with improper assessment or treatment.
- **Specific health conditions:** Some therapies, such as herbal supplements, may interact with medications or be contraindicated in animals with particular health issues, such as liver disease.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Traditional Veterinary Care</b>	<b>Integrative Veterinary Care</b>
<b>Philosophy</b>	Treats disease using conventional methods	Treats the whole animal, focusing on health and wellness
<b>Approach</b>	Primarily reactive, addressing acute issues and disease	Preventive and proactive, aiming to optimize long-term health
<b>Modalities</b>	Surgery, pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, and critical care	Acupuncture, chiropractic, physical therapy, nutrition, herbal medicine
<b>Applications</b>	Best for acute conditions, infections, and emergencies.	Ideal for chronic conditions, pain management, and rehabilitation
<b>Side Effects</b>	Potential side effects from medications and surgeries	Minimal side effects, though improper application can pose risks
<b>Speed of results</b>	Quick results in emergencies or severe conditions	Gradual results, especially in chronic or non-urgent cases

## Providing a balanced approach

The choice between traditional veterinary care and integrative veterinary care is not an either-or decision but rather a matter of finding the right balance for your pet's needs. Both approaches have unique strengths and are most effective when used together to provide individualized, well-rounded care. By understanding the benefits and limitations of each approach, you can make informed decisions and work with your veterinarian to create a care plan tailored to your animal's specific health goals.

As more animal owners recognize the value of combining traditional and complementary approaches, integrative veterinary care is gaining popularity. Not only does this approach provide pets with more comprehensive care, it also fosters stronger partnerships between veterinarians and animal owners.

A key challenge in blending these approaches is ensuring open communication between veterinarians practicing traditional care and those offering integrative therapies. When practitioners collaborate, animals benefit from comprehensive, cohesive care. By embracing both science and tradition, integrative care offers a hopeful path for improving the lives of our beloved animal companions. Whether addressing chronic pain, promoting recovery, or simply maintaining optimal health, this whole-animal approach ensures that pets receive the care they deserve.



# Facts + Statistics: Pet Ownership and Insurance

## Homeowners

### IN THIS FACTS + STATISTICS

- Pet insurance
- Pet ownership in the United States
- Number Of U.S. Households That Own A Pet, by Type Of Animal
- Total U.S. Pet Industry Expenditures, 2014-2024 (1)
- Basic Annual Expenses for Dogs and Cats (1)

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## Pet insurance

According to the [North American Pet Health Insurance Association](#), (NAPHIA), pet insurance has existed outside the U.S. since the early 1900's. Lassie, the famous TV collie, received the first pet insurance policy issued in the U.S. in 1982.

NAPHIA's [State of the Industry Report 2024 Highlights](#) states that the total premium volume for pet insurance in the U.S. was \$3.9 billion in 2023. The total number of pets insured in the U.S. at year-end 2023 was nearly 5.7 million, a 17 percent increase over 2022. The average accident and illness premium for dogs was \$676 a year or \$56 a month. The average accident and illness premium for cats was \$383 a year or \$32 a month. The largest share of insured pets reside in California, New York, and Florida. Dogs comprised the largest category of insured pets (80 percent versus cats at 20 percent).

## Pet ownership in the United States

An estimated sixty-six percent of U.S. households, or about 86.9 million families, own a pet, according to the 2023-2024 [National Pet Owners Survey](#) conducted by the American Pet Products Association (APPA). This is up from 56 percent of U.S. households in 1988, the first year the survey was conducted.

Total pet industry expenditures in the U.S. totaled \$147 billion in 2023, up 7.5 percent from \$136.8 billion in 2022.

## Number Of U.S. Households That Own A Pet, by Type Of Animal

(millions)

Pet	Number
Dog	65.1
Cat	46.5
Freshwater fish	11.1
Small animal	6.7
Bird	6.1
Reptile	6.0
Horse	2.2
Saltwater fish	2.2

Source: American Pet Products Association's 2023-2024 National Pet Owners Survey.

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## Total U.S. Pet Industry Expenditures, 2014-2024 (1)

(\$ billions)

Year	Expenditure (2)
2014	\$58.0
2015	60.3
2016	66.8
2017	69.5
2018	90.5
2019	97.1
2020	108.9
2021	123.6
2022	136.8
2023	147.0
2024	150.6

(1) Includes food, supplies and over-the-counter medicine, veterinary care, live animal purchases and grooming and boarding.

(2) Expenditures for 2018 to 2023 are actuals and 2024 is an estimate from the American Pet Products Association's 2023-2024 National Pet Owners Survey; expenditures for 2014 to 2017 are from earlier surveys.

Source: American Pet Products Association's National Pet Owners Surveys.

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## Basic Annual Expenses for Dogs and Cats (1)

Expense	Dog	Cat
Surgical vet	\$472	\$232
Food	354	300
Routine visit	250	198
Kennel boarding	315	105
Food treats	102	78
Vitamins	77	59
Toys	68	49
Groomer/grooming aids	37	39

(1) APPA does not ask survey participants how much in total they spend on their dog or cats annually. The expenses listed above are not all inclusive and each category was asked separately of the survey participant.

Note: Data provided by APPA for this specific chart is from the prior survey (2022-2023) and is not available from the most recent survey (2023-2024).

Source: American Pet Products Association's 2022-2023 National Pet Owners Survey.

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## **Annual Data Report 2019-2020**

A Report of the Association of American  
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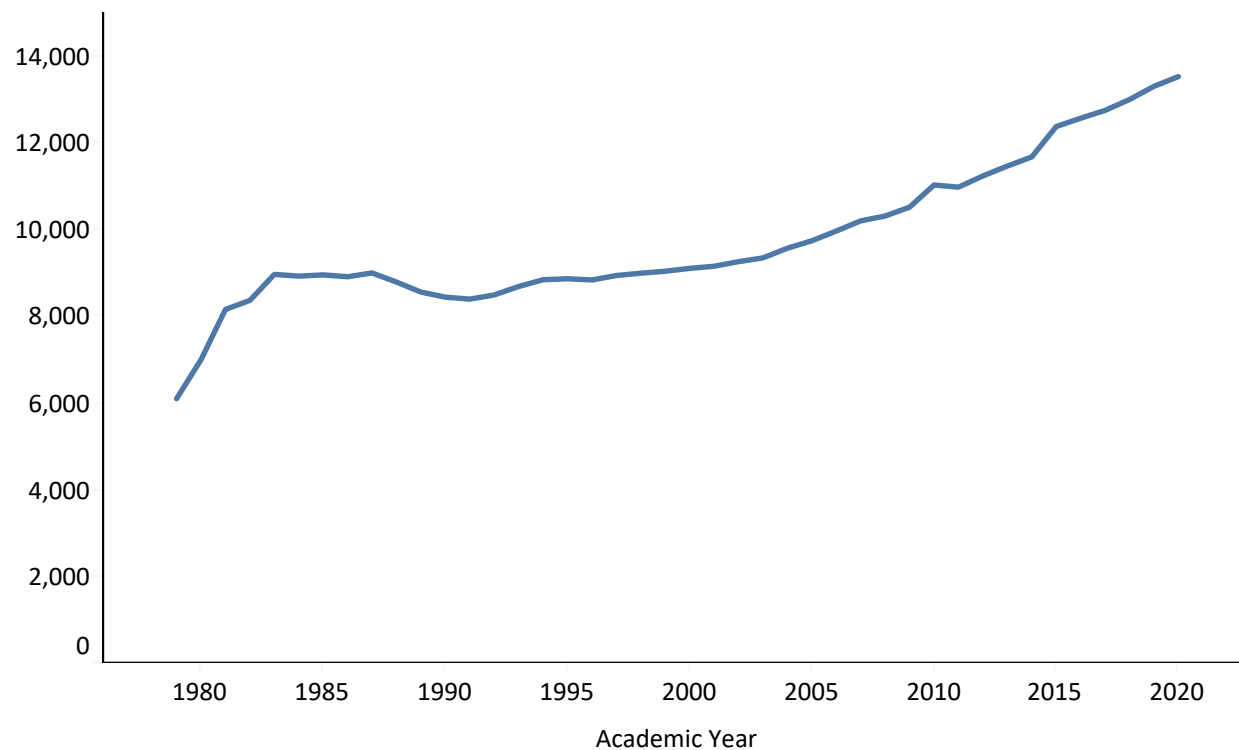
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**Total Enrollment at US Colleges of Veterinary Medicine**  
**Internal AAVMC Data Reports**  
**1980-2020**



On average, seats have increased 2.0% per year since 1980. During the last decade (2009-2019), the number of first year seats at US colleges of veterinary medicine have increased an average of 2.4% per year.

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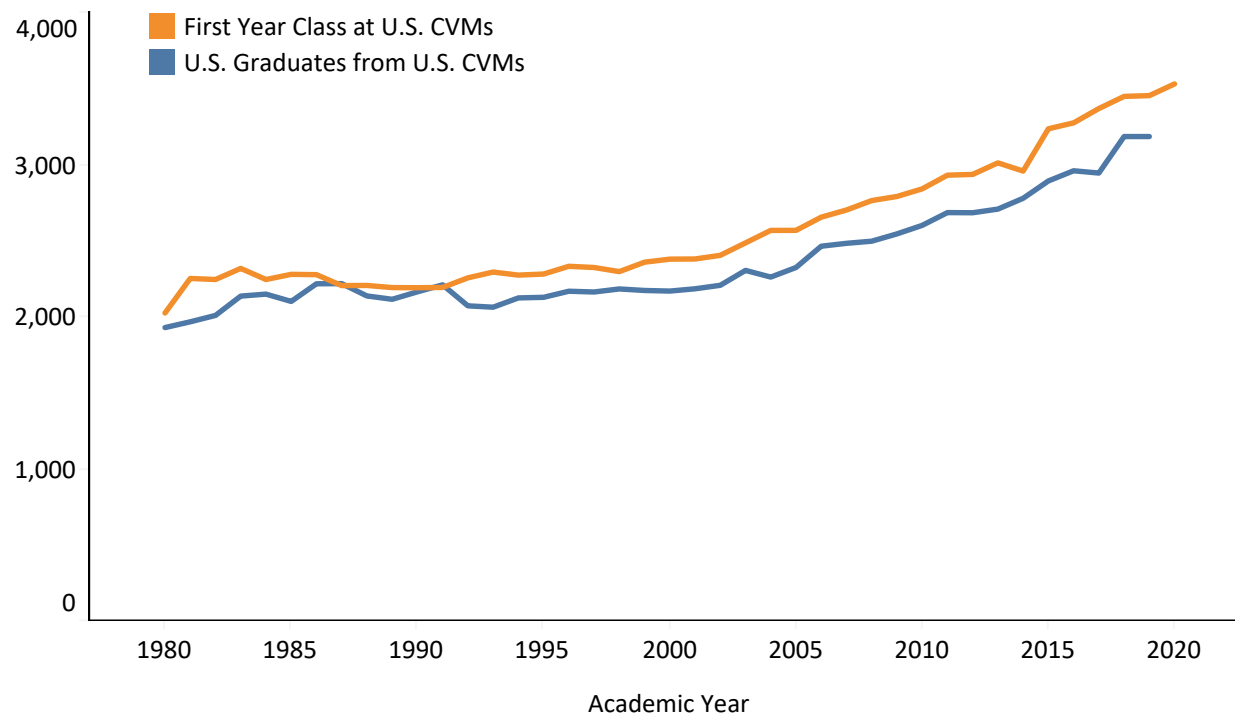
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**First Year and Graduation Classes  
at US Colleges of Veterinary Medicine  
Internal AAVMC Data Reports  
1980-2020**



Although the relationship between first year seats and graduation is expected to be a direct one, there are numerous reasons that explain perceived lags in graduation of DVM students. Numerous dual-degree options allow DVM students to step in and out of the professional curriculum.

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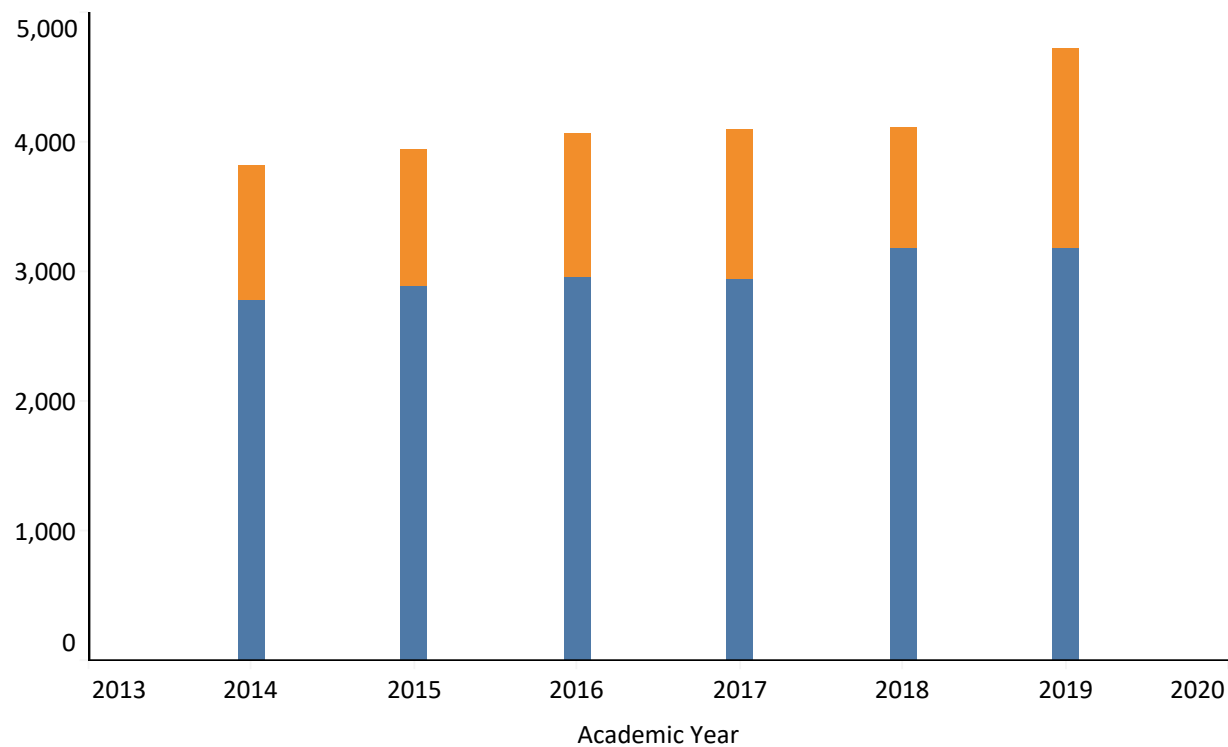
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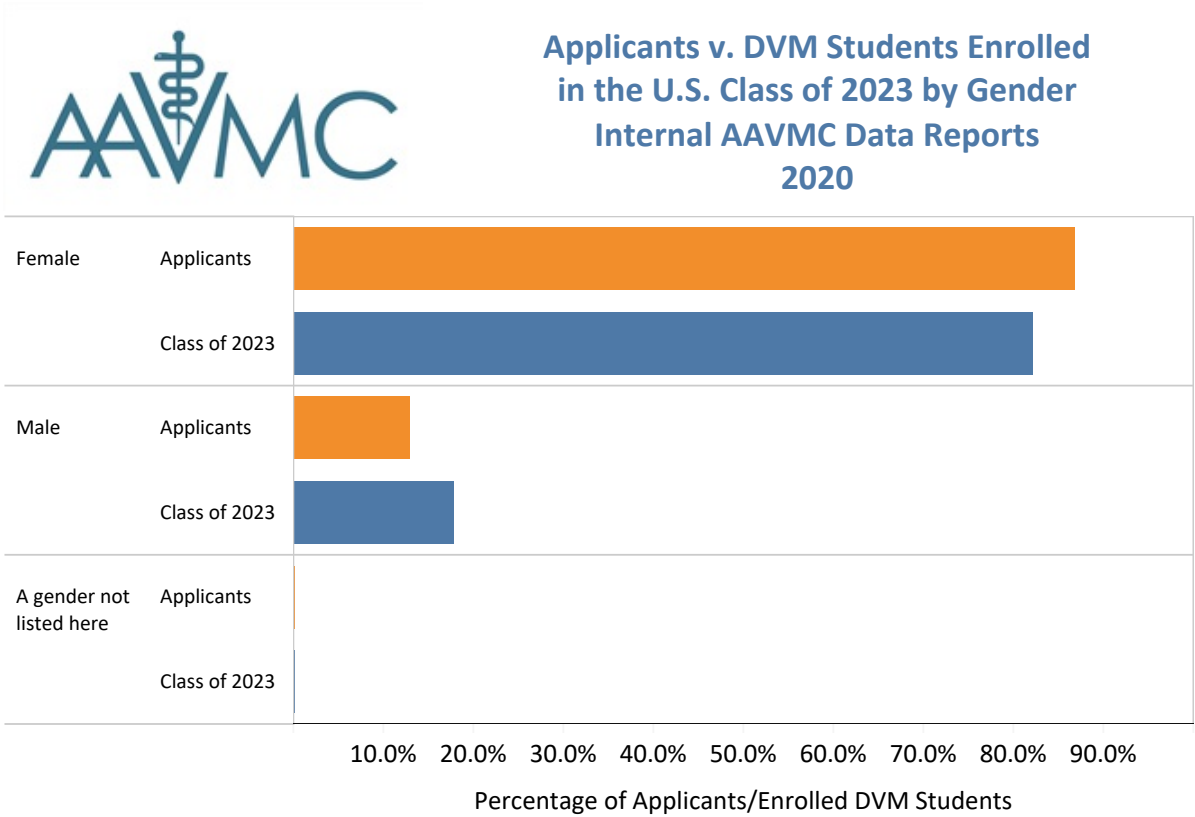


**Total US Citizen Graduates  
from all AAVMC Member Institutions  
Internal AAVMC Data Reports  
2014-2019**



Data set includes all graduates who are US citizens graduating from an American or International AAVMC member institution.

US Graduates from International CVMs  
U.S. Graduates from U.S. CVMs



While not easily visible here, applicants and students who indicated their gender as not listed here are represented as 0.2% and 0.3% respectively.

The total number of applicants to the class of 2022 was 7,076.

The total DVM student enrollment across the U.S. Colleges of Veterinary Medicine for the class of 2022 is 3,456.

- Applicants
- Class of 2023

# AAEP Equine Veterinary Sustainability Initiative

The AAEP formed the Commission on Equine Veterinary Sustainability in 2022 to develop strategies to retain and recruit more veterinarians to equine practice.

## Shortage of Equine Practitioners

Many areas of the United States and beyond currently face a shortage of equine practitioners to provide veterinary care to horses and other equids. This equine welfare issue will further intensify without action to address the diminishing number of equine veterinarians.

The AAEP has formed the **Commission on Equine Veterinary Sustainability** to develop strategies to retain and recruit more veterinarians to equine practice.

The Commission will be led by AAEP-member volunteers with work focused in five key areas: compensation, strategies for effective emergency coverage, veterinary practice culture, internships, and supporting the growth and development of the equine veterinary student.

While developing solutions to the five key factors affecting sustainability of equine practice, the Commission will ensure that the needs of one- and two-doctor practices are carefully considered. Approximately 50% of AAEP members operate practices of this size. Outreach to horse owners and equine industry partners will create expanded awareness and yield additional perspective.

Transforming equine practice is one of the largest initiatives ever undertaken by the AAEP. We look forward to collaborating with equine veterinarians and those who help support them in all facets of practice to change the numbers.

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## Why a Shortage of Equine Veterinarians?

According to AAEP data, approximately 1.3% of new veterinary graduates enter equine practice directly each year, and another 4.5% pursue further training in equine internship positions. Within five years, however, 50% of all these veterinarians leave for small animal practice or quit veterinary medicine altogether.

The primary reasons are burnout due to the personal demands of the profession and personal struggle due to the lower starting salaries for equine practice when compared to companion animal practice. Many new veterinarians begin their career with more than \$200,000 in student loan debt.

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# CERTIFICATION

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**AVCA, the world leader in animal chiropractic care, is the primary national credential in North America.**

## Animal Chiropractic Certification Commission (ACCC)

of the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA) is the primary national credential for this field in North America. Certification was developed based upon input and oversight from both professions. The ACCC develops standards of care in animal chiropractic, conducts a professional certification program and awards credentials to individuals who meet established criteria and assessments in different modes of care.

The ACCC promotes the highest standards of competence and safety in animal chiropractic care for the protection and benefit of the patient as well as the public.

Certification is a voluntary process by which a non-government entity grants a time-limited recognition and use of a credential to an individual after verifying that he/she has met predetermined and standardized criteria. Certification is distinct from licensure in that it is voluntary and requires recertification to maintain the credential.

Earning certification from the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association ACCC represents a significant professional achievement. ACCC/AVCA Certification makes an important statement about professional competence that is recognized by the profession, the public and some regulatory bodies.

## For more information on certification, please use the following links:

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- [Certification Requirements, Eligibility](#)
- [Steps to Certification](#)
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# Resolution of Orthostatic Intention Tremors in a 3-week-old Male Great Dane Following Chiropractic: A Case Report & Review of the Literature

Annals of Vertebral Subluxation Research, Volume 2018

Gene Giggleman, DVM & Ashley Shiver, DC Annals of Vertebral Subluxation Research ~ February 5, 2018 ~ pages 29-37  
Abstract Objective: To review the resolution of tremors in a canine following chiropractic care. Clinical Features: A three-week-old...

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## Resolution of Constipation, Polydipsia and Generalized Weakness in a 14-year-old Canine Following Chiropractic Adjustment: A Case Report & Review of the Literature

Petra Sullwold, DC, CAC<sup>1</sup>

Natalia Lavallie, DC<sup>2</sup>

1. *Private Practice of Chiropractic, Durango, CO*
2. *Private Practice of Chiropractic, Geneva, IL*

### Abstract

**Objective:** This paper presents the chiropractic management and care of a spayed 14-year-old female Boston terrier canine with constipation, polydipsia, generalized weakness, and vertebral subluxation complex.

**Clinical Features:** Patient presented with 6-day history of constipation, polydipsia, and generalized weakness, and an examination utilizing static and motion palpation was conducted. Patient also has a history of impacted anal glands, xerosis, and obesity. On presentation, the dog could not stand or walk and multiple vertebral subluxations were identified.

**Intervention and Outcomes:** Patient was seen for chiropractic evaluation and treatment twice to remove vertebral subluxations and restore optimal function of the nervous system. After one chiropractic adjustment the ability to walk independently improved and the patient experienced a significant bowel movement immediately after the adjustment.

**Conclusion:** Chiropractic may be an effective approach for the management of functional constipation in canines and further research evaluating treatment protocols for animals is needed to optimize benefits of care. Spinal adjustments were performed using manual technique, and chiropractic treatment was administered under referral from a veterinarian.

**Key Words:** *chiropractic, animal chiropractic, vertebral subluxation complex, adjustment, constipation, canine*

### Introduction

In the United States, constipation is said to be one of the most common conditions diagnosed among domestic dogs.<sup>1,2,3</sup> However, there has been limited research performed to establish exact prevalence and incidence rates of gastrointestinal dysmotility among the estimated 69.9 million dogs in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Interest in the study of canine gastrointestinal conditions and diseases is usually out of concern for public health. As a result, numerous studies examining incidence and prevalence rates of infectious diseases among dog populations have been conducted internationally.<sup>5-7</sup> Other research is concerned with the prevalence of overweight and obesity among domestic dogs, especially in relationship to other diseases. In 2006, Lund et al determined that overweight and obesity have a combined prevalence of 34.1% among the adult dog population in the United States. This study also determined that gastrointestinal diseases diagnosed by veterinarians are prevalent in 6.6% of

obese and 7.3% of both overweight and normal weight adult dogs.<sup>8</sup>

These statistics are valuable for understanding how many dogs in the United States are at risk for developing musculoskeletal and cardiovascular disorders, glucose intolerance and diabetes mellitus, and bladder and mammary cancer.<sup>8</sup> Further research also suggests canine obesity as a risk factor for hypertension and immune dysfunction, which is closely related to gastrointestinal function.<sup>8</sup> Banfield Pet Hospital is a large privately owned company that publishes the State of Pet Health® Report annually.<sup>9</sup> The first report was published in 2001, and it is the first report of its kind to prioritize optimization of animal health and welfare. The 2016 report estimates a 79.7% increase in canine diabetes since 2006, which is a risk factor for constipation due to chronic dehydration.<sup>9,10</sup> A study conducted by Rakha et al. found that