

Holistic Wellness for Your Pet

BY LAURA LIEFF



Dr. Christine Koelker
of Animal Camp
Chiropractic



Christine Koelker, D.C. has devoted her life to animals. Bringing a decade of professional experience, Koelker is an IVCA certified animal chiropractor who provides comprehensive and compassionate care and bodywork for pets through her Edwards-based business, Animal Camp Chiropractic.

"I don't recall a time when I didn't want to work with animals," says Koelker. "I grew up with cats and dogs, and I remember people calling my sister to babysit their kids and contacting me to look after their pets."

In college, she initially wanted to be a veterinarian but realized she did not want life-threatening emergencies to be part of her career. Instead, she pursued advertising, which took her all over North America. During that time, Koelker sustained an injury that led to meeting a chiropractor who helped her get stronger and healthier

than she was prior to the injury.

"That experience sparked my interest in medicine again, and I realized that I wanted to focus on a holistic approach to maintaining a preventative lifestyle," Koelker explains. "That doctor taught me how to take care of my body and prevent injury, and I wanted to do the same for others."

Koelker went back to school (she already had a Bachelor of Arts in communication advertising from Michigan State) to earn her Doctorate of Chiropractic at Logan University, as well as her Master's in clinical nutrition and human performance. Although Koelker initially went to chiropractic school to treat humans, while she was there, she learned about getting certified for animals and decided to earn her post-graduate certificate in animal chiropractic.

ANIMALS NEED CHIROPRACTORS, TOO

While Eagle County is extremely dog-friendly, Koelker has found that not everyone is aware that animal chiropractors exist. She explains that equine chiropractic is a much more well-known practice, because horses have participated in competitive sporting events for a long time. Conversely, competitive canine events have recently become popular and, therefore, so has chiropractic care for them. She also feels that because dogs are now treated more like family members, pet owners are prioritizing their healthcare.

"I've seen a lot of growth within the pet industry over the last 10 years," Koelker explains. "It's become a billion-dollar business, and pet owners are more interested in holistic ways of taking care of their animals."

Although Koelker has witnessed an undeniable change in pet care over the last few years, she also encounters skeptics.

"I understand the skepticism for those who have never experienced chiropractic care before," she says. "But, they bring their dogs in because of a referral from a vet or friend, and the treatment speaks for itself. People are now more open-minded regarding preventative techniques and are more interested in wellness."

HOUSE CALLS FOR LOCALS + TOURISTS

In addition to wellness, the mobile aspect of Koelker's business sets Animal Camp Chiropractic apart, because her services are available and accessible for locals and tourists throughout the Vail and Roaring Fork Valleys. She offers house calls to all her clients, which, she has found, benefits everyone, because it allows her to provide more thorough treatment and assessment.

"Dog parents appreciate the convenience, and I get a better perspective on what's happening at home — for example, wood floors and/or stairs — and then the dog can take a nap after treatment, rather than climbing in and out of a vehicle," she says. "When I see where a pet is living, I can also make suggestions regarding adjusting the dog's home environment."

As for visitors, Koelker has found that sometimes people bring their dogs to Colorado and don't consider the effects the altitude and terrain might

have on their pets.

"Dogs can be like their parents; they get excited and push their outdoor activities too hard in the mountains," she explains. "I can do in-room treatments at pet-friendly hotels, which allows dogs to have an equally enjoyable vacation as their parents."

"10 years ago, no one was doing chiropractic care on dogs, so I was the odd-ball," Koelker says. "I wanted to normalize it, and now there are other practitioners and vets who have gotten certified."

Going forward, Koelker is excited to expand her business and continue to introduce clients to the art and science of animal chiropractic care.

"I followed my passion for animals, which is what drove me to make my practice exclusive to them," she adds. "I get so much joy out of working with animals that it made sense for me to focus on their care." +

animalcampchiro.com.

WHAT IT ALL ENTAILS

Animal Camp Chiropractic's wellness treatments include:

- + **Bodywork**
releasing soft tissue tension, trigger point release and stretching
- + **Adjustment**
focusing on and working the joints
- + **Canine cranio-sacral therapy**
a gentle hands-on technique that releases tension in the central nervous system, which helps reduce pain, relieve dysfunction and improve overall well-being



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