Animal Chiropractic:
Implementation Update
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An overview of the statutory requirements for animal chiropractic enacted earlier this year by the Colorado General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Bill Ritter was provided in CVMA Voice issue 2009:2 (page 17; also available at www.colovma.org under the Issues section). In short, Colorado law now allows a Colorado licensed chiropractor to register with the Department of Regulatory Agencies to provide animal chiropractic on dogs and horses; registration requires 210 hours of animal-specific education. Importantly, animal chiropractic may be provided only if a Colorado licensed veterinarian has examined the animal patient and determined to provide (or not) a written veterinary medical clearance.

The statute authorizes the Colorado Board of Chiropractic to initiate rulemaking should such action be needed to implement the statute. CVMA has learned, in discussion with the chiropractic board’s program director, that—because the statutory language governing animal chiropractic is so specific—the board sees only one item for clarification in rule (namely, that the 20-hour continuing education requirement for animal chiropractors is in addition to the other hours required for chiropractic license renewal). CVMA worked diligently to make certain this level of detail appeared in statute so that the framework for animal chiropractic, and the safeguards it contains for patients, could not be changed without great effort.

CVMA raised a number of questions about implementation of the statute, which were addressed by the chiropractic board’s program director (Brian Pritchard). For example, CVMA asked the board to make the list of registered providers of animal chiropractic easily accessible on the chiropractic board website, for ease of use by veterinarians and the public. In regard to the educational requirements, Mr. Pritchard intends to convene a working group of representatives from both the chiropractic and veterinary medicine boards (as required in statute) to review educational programs being offered nationally at accredited institutions, with such programs to be evaluated against the educational criteria—ranging from animal anatomy to zoonotic diseases—that are specified in statute.

Mr. Pritchard indicated the goal is to complete the evaluation of education programs and develop the application for individual registration by the end of this year so that application materials will be available online by January 1, 2010. Until these administrative activities have been completed and applications for registration have been approved by the chiropractic board, a licensed chiropractor may provide animal chiropractic only under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. CVMA will keep members apprised of developments as the provision of animal chiropractic by licensed, registered chiropractors in Colorado is transformed from concept to reality.