

SP-DCRPP-ACU
Reserved Practice Permit – Animal Chiropractic
Approved Date: NSCC November 15, 2025
Amended: NSCNR effective May 27, 2026
Next Review Date: 2029

Note to Readers: In the event of any inconsistency between this document and the legislation that governs chiropractic and naturopathic practice in Nova Scotia, the legislation prevails.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nova Scotia College of Chiropractors (**NSCC**) and the Nova Scotia Veterinary Medical Association (**NSVMA**) are parties to a Memorandum of Understanding re: Chiropractic Treatment of Animals (the **Memorandum of Understanding**).

The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding is to enable appropriately trained chiropractors to provide services to animal clients in Nova Scotia. This Standard of Practice addresses the scope of practice and standards of practice for animal chiropractic.

2. APPLICATION AND ADMINISTRATION

This Standard of Practice shall apply to all chiropractors registered and holding an active chiropractor license with the NSCNR (the “**DC Registrant**” or collectively the “**DC Registrants**”).

The administration and application of this Standard of Practice shall be the responsibility of the Registrar. Should the NSCNR become aware of any alleged breach or noncompliance with this Standard of Practice, it may take any action it considers appropriate, including but not limited to:

- a. contacting the DC Registrant to request the immediate remedy of any suspected breach or non-compliance;
- b. filing a formal complaint under the *Regulated Health Professions Act* regarding the suspected breach or non-compliance as professional misconduct; and/or
- c. immediate suspension or revocation of the DC Registrant’s Reserved Practice Permit.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Standard of Practice are:

- a) to identify who may perform animal chiropractic;
- b) to identify when and how animal chiropractic may be conducted;
- c) to outline the scope of practice of animal chiropractic;



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- d) to ensure appropriate coordination and consultation between chiropractors and veterinarians in the chiropractic care of animals; and
- e) to identify the minimum standards of practice that must be followed when performing animal chiropractic.

4. DEFINITIONS

The following terms have the following meanings when used in this Standard of Practice:

Animal Chiropractic means chiropractic services provided to animals by a licensed chiropractor in Nova Scotia.

Animal Chiropractor means a chiropractor providing or offering animal chiropractic services in Nova Scotia and who is a licensed registrant in good standing of the NSCNR and holds an advanced practice permit in animal chiropractic from the NSCNR

Board refers to the Board of the Nova Scotia Chiropractic and Naturopathic Regulator.

Professional Misconduct has the same meaning as set out in the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and includes failing to maintain the standards of practice.

Reserved Practice has the same meaning as set out in the *Chiropractic and Naturopathic Regulations* and means an activity, procedure or service within the scope of practice of naturopathy that:

- a. involves sufficient risk to the public, as determined by the Board;
- b. the Board requires licensed person to meet additional education, additional training or other requirements beyond an entry to practice level to engage in, and;
- c. a licensed person may engage in only with the approval of the registrar and may require a specific permit.

Reserved Practice Permit refers to a permit issued by the NSCNR authorizing a Registrant to perform specified restricted activities upon successful completion of NSCNR-approved training and competency requirements. Reserved Practice Permits must be applied for and renewed annually in accordance with the requirements set out in the applicable Standard of Practice.

Veterinary Chiropractic refers to manipulation treatments provided to animals by a licensed veterinarian in Nova Scotia.



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5. RESERVED PRACTICE PERMIT – ANIMAL CHIROPRACTIC

A. Animal Chiropractic is authorized for DC Registrants holding a current **Reserved Practice Permit – Animal Chiropractic**. This permit authorizes the practice of animal chiropractic in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding and this Standard of Practice.

B. Prohibitions on Animal Chiropractic:

- a) DC Registrants who do not hold a Reserved Practice Permit – Animal Chiropractic **are prohibited** from performing treatment on animals.
- b) DC Registrants **may only** perform Animal Chiropractic if they hold an active chiropractor license with the NSCNR **and** if they have been issued a Reserved Practice Permit to perform acupuncture /dry needling by the NSCNR and where there is

C. Scope of Practice: Animal Chiropractic is described as follows:

The practice of animal chiropractic encompasses a comprehensive approach to neuromusculoskeletal health and overall well-being of animals. It includes the application of specialized chiropractic training, skills, and clinical judgment as are:

- (a) taught in approved animal chiropractic educational programs approved by the NSCC (in addition to a Doctor of Chiropractic degree), and*
- (b) in accordance with clinical competency standards, approved standards of practice, and practice guidelines,*

in order to:

- (i) examine, assess, and provide an animal chiropractic diagnosis and an appropriate treatment plan for the musculoskeletal health conditions of animals across the lifespan,*
- (ii) request additional testing for differential diagnostic purposes via veterinarian services,*
- (iii) treat and manage acute and chronic health conditions of animals using approved, non-invasive manual and adjunctive therapies,*
- (iv) promote optimal health and injury prevention in animals, and*
- (v) refer to and partner with other appropriate health care providers, including veterinary professionals, where in the best interest of the animal.*



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For clarity, the scope of practice of animal chiropractic does not include the application of drugs or surgery, dental care or other restricted acts limited to veterinary medicine.

6. STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

A. Qualifications for Permit

A DC Registrant may apply for a Reserved Practice Permit – Animal Chiropractic where they meet the following criteria:

- a) hold an active chiropractor license with the NSCNR;
- b) show proof of completion of an NSCNR-approved animal chiropractic specialized training program in diagnosing and treating musculoskeletal disorders in animals, primarily focusing on the spine, joints, muscles, and nervous system;
- c) show proof of professional liability insurance coverage which includes the use of animal chiropractic, as needed.

B. Training and Competency Requirements

Registrants must provide proof of completing an Animal Chiropractic training program which meets the following requirements:

- a) **approved by the NSCNR** (please refer to Appendix 1 for pre-approved programs);
- b) **provides at least the minimum hours of course instruction consistent with the requirements of an American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVAC) approved Animal Chiropractic Program;**
- c) includes **an in-person clinical learning component;** and
- d) includes a formal **clinical assessment of competency.**

C. Ongoing Competence and Maintenance of Permit

DC Registrants who are issued a Reserved Practice Permit – Animal Chiropractic are required to renew their permit on an annual basis.

D. Quality Assurance

- a) The NSCNR may at any time request that a DC Registrant submit training or education records, appointment calendars, patient records, emergency protocols, and any other

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documentation required to demonstrate continued compliance with this Standard of Practice. Failure to do so may result in suspension or revocation of the Registrant's Reserved Practice Permit

- b) The NSCNR may conduct inspections at any time as set out in the *Chiropractic and Naturopathy Regulations* and Nova Scotia Chiropractic and Naturopathic Regulator Bylaws.
- c) Failure to maintain continued competence or first aid certification, submit records when requested, or meet any permit maintenance requirements may result in immediate suspension or revocation of the Registrant's Reserved Practice Permit and authorization to perform associated activities.
- d) The NSCNR may refuse to issue or may impose conditions on a Reserved Practice Permit- Animal Chiropractic if the DC Registrant does not meet the requirements set out in this Standard of Practice or does not demonstrate sufficient knowledge, skill, judgment, or readiness to practise safely.

E. Standards of Care

1. Referral

- a) Animal Chiropractors require a referral from a registered veterinarian in order to assess, examine, determine an animal chiropractic diagnosis, or provide treatment to animals.
- b) The primary responsibility for the health care of animals is with registrants of the NSVMA, who are responsible for appropriate history taking, comprehensive examination, including clinical pathology, imaging, and the overall treatment/management of animals.

2. Consent

- a) Consent to the chiropractic care of animals must be fully informed and voluntarily given by the owner of the animal.
- b) Consent must be in writing and should form part of the patient record.

3. Examination

- a) Animal Chiropractors must always perform a thorough clinical assessment and physical examination to assess the animal's musculoskeletal health, focusing on posture, gait, and movement patterns.
- b) Animal Chiropractors must always provide an appropriate treatment plan within the scope of practice prior to treatment.
- c) Animal Chiropractors must refer the animal to a licensed veterinarian for imaging, laboratory work, or other diagnostic testing if they suspect underlying conditions.



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F. Treatment

- a) All treatments provided by Animal Chiropractors must be within the approved scope of practice and supported by the practitioner’s individual competency. Depending on the practitioner’s individual competency, treatments may include:
 - i. Spinal Manipulation: The primary treatment provided by Animal Chiropractors involves adjusting the vertebrae and joints to correct function or structure, which can relieve pain, restore mobility, and improve overall function.
 - ii. Joint Manipulation: Animal Chiropractors may address issues in other joints of the body, such as the hips, shoulders, and legs.
 - iii. Muscle and Soft Tissue Therapy: Techniques such as massage, stretching, and other manual therapies may be used by Animal Chiropractors to relieve muscle tension and improve range of motion.
 - iv. Chiropractic Exercise and Rehabilitation Programs: Animal Chiropractors may design and implement exercise programs to strengthen the animal's muscles, improve mobility, and prevent future injuries as part of their animal chiropractic program of care.
 - v. Preventative Care: Regular check-ups and adjustments to maintain the animal’s musculoskeletal health, particularly in performance animals like horses and dogs.
- b) Animal Chiropractors are not permitted to use any additional modalities or adjunctive therapies unless training and competency standards of the practitioner are specifically approved by the NSCC.

G. Collaboration and Referral

- a) Animal Chiropractors have a duty to refer the animal to a veterinarian when a case requires or is suspected to require veterinarian intervention and/or testing beyond Animal Chiropractic scope of practice.
- b) Animal Chiropractors may be part of a broader collaborative care team that includes veterinarians and other specialists to provide comprehensive care to animals.

H. Legal and Ethical Considerations

- a) Animal Chiropractors may not hold themselves out to be veterinarians or to practice veterinary medicine.
- b) Animal Chiropractors must adhere to ethical standards of the NSCC, standards of practice and practice guidelines.
- c) not list Animal Chiropractic as a “specialty”.

I. Record Keeping



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- a) Animal Chiropractors must maintain in the record of care a copy of the written referral from a member of the NSVMA to assess and treat the animal.
- b) Animal Chiropractors must provide, upon request, a copy of relevant portions of the record of care to the treating registrant of NSVMA within a reasonable time of providing chiropractic care to the animal.

J. Professional Liability

- a) Animal Chiropractors are required to hold additional professional liability protection/insurance with specific coverage, if needed, for Animal Chiropractic in an amount equal to or greater than \$1,000,000.00.
- b) Proof of insurance must be provided to the NSCC annually upon renewal of the permit.

K. Facilities Standard

- a) Where animals are provided with chiropractic care in the same office as humans, Animal Chiropractors must maintain a separate portion of the office devoted to animal chiropractic and must ensure the space is compliant with all applicable regulations and safety requirements. Maintenance of separate office space is a minimum requirement for health and sanitation reasons.
- b) Registrants must visibly and publicly display the Reserved Practice Permit – Animal Chiropractic at the registrant's place of work;

L. Continued Competency

- a) Animal Chiropractors must provide evidence of active practice on animals within the prior year upon renewal of the permit.

7. EXEMPTIONS

Notwithstanding the above, NSCC registrants are permitted to treat animals if they:

- a) are within the first two years of enrollment and actively participating in an AVCA Approved Animal Chiropractic Program, or a substantially equivalent program as approved by NSCC;
- b) provide chiropractic care to animals within the parameters of their course of study;
- c) inform and obtain written consent of the owner of the animal(s) under care that they have enrolled and are participating in but have not yet graduated from an AVCA Approved Animal



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Chiropractic Program Provider, or substantially equivalent program in animal chiropractic approved by the NSCC; and

d) while enrolled and participating in an AVCA Approved Animal Chiropractic Program, or substantially equivalent program in animal chiropractic approved by the NSCC, provide animal chiropractic care only within the boundaries of personal competency and program training

e) provide chiropractic care to animals as a recognized instructor of an AVCA Approved Animal Chiropractic Program, or substantially equivalent approved program in animal chiropractic or veterinary chiropractic.

8. RESTRICTIONS

The following restrictions apply to the use of titles and public representation to ensure clarity of regulated authority, scope of practice, and credentialing:

- a) No person other than a licensed registrant of the NSCC holding an advanced practice permit in animal chiropractic (i.e. Animal Chiropractors) shall claim to be an animal chiropractor or to provide animal chiropractic.
- b) NSCC registrants, including Animal Chiropractors, are not permitted to claim to provide “veterinary chiropractic”, including any variations, abbreviations or equivalents in another language.

9. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

[Regulated Health Professions Act \(2023\)](#)

[Regulated Health Professions General Regulations](#)

Regulations Respecting Chiropractic and Naturopathy

Nova Scotia Chiropractic and Naturopathic Regulator Bylaws

9. ADDITIONAL RELEVANT STANDARDS OF PRACTICE:

Registrants are advised that all NSCNR Standards of Practice apply, including but not limited to, specific application of:

- Patient Record Management
- Professional Liability
- Infectious Disease Prevention and Control



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APPENDIX 1

NSCNR Approved Training Programs for DC Acupuncture/Dry Needling

Practitioners must complete an accredited program approved by the NSCC, encompassing a minimum of 200 hours which includes an in-person component in both clinical and academic training, and pass a competency exam.

- Acupuncture Canada, Levels AA1 –3
- McMaster University Contemporary Medical Acupuncture Program, Units 1 – 5
- CMCC Clinical Acupuncture Certificate Program
- Integrated Seminar Series
- Or an equivalent program assessed and specifically approved by the NSCNR Board