

Doctor eases pain for both humans and their four-legged friends

By Paloma Migone, Special to the Beaver
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News



TAKING CARE Dr. Mark Fleet works on Oreo. Dr. Fleet is the only certified animal chiropractor in Oakville. He divides his practice between people and dogs.

A black and white fluffy patient strolls down the hallway into Mark Fleet's examination room.

Oreo, a Shetland Sheepdog, arrives for his first chiropractic appointment. He has been having back problems after getting bitten by another dog.

Fleet kneels on the floor and begins assessing the dog, adjusting his spine, and ending his session with a treat from the mooing-cow cookie jar on the counter.

Oreo is one of the many canine patients treated at Fleet's Brant Street office that welcomes around 15 dogs a week.

Although dog visits are frequent, they are not the bulk of Fleet's patient list. Fleet is a chiropractor, who works on humans, mostly, in three of his four examination rooms.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Fleet travels to places like Orangeville, Smithville, Stoney Creek and Guelph to also work on horses. Sometimes he goes as far as Florida.

At his last Sunshine State trip, Fleet treated 48 horses in three days.

"I love animals. I feel like I have a strong connection with animals and I feel really comfortable around animals and to be able to take what I've been trained to do and utilize it for animals, to me is great," he said.

Fleet focuses on the animal's nervous system by adjusting spinal misalignment or joint dysfunctions, also knows as subluxation that can cause a number of health problems.

With simple hand movements, Fleet can help dogs and horses -- a skill he didn't always apply to animals.

After graduating from Palmer College of Chiropractic in 1995, his career was solely focused on humans.

Until, one of his patients, who attended his two-afternoon a week office in Campbellville, Ontario had an injured dog. The pet had a herniated disc and required surgery. Since the dog was 11-years-old, the veterinarian recommended to put it to sleep.

"She called me up and said I'm bringing you my dog. The back left leg was flipped over and the dog couldn't walk without dragging it on the ground."

With no training for animals at the time, Fleet worked on the dog by instinct. The next day, he got an e-mail that read, "What did you do to my dog?"

"I went uh oh, I killed the dog," said Fleet.

Contrary to his initial fear, the dog was 95 per cent better. Its quick recovery was Fleet's turning point; he decided to apply his skills on animals.

He received a post-graduate certification in animal chiropractic from Parker Chiropractic College and was also certified through the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA). Fleet is the only AVCA certified animal chiropractor in Oakville -- a fact that can easily be check by visiting www.avcadoctors.com.

After five years of practicing on animals, Fleet has seen dogs with herniated discs, health problems, arthritis, injuries, and neurological problems. Horse treatment is usually different than canines, which are mostly treated for performance rea-

sons. Some animal chiropractic cases are similar to human problems, according to Fleet, who prefers the advantages of treating dogs and horses.

“To me treating animals is more objective than dealing with humans. They can’t speak and can’t tell you what the problem is, so it’s all up to you to find out what the problem is through the tools that I have available. That’s why it’s so neat,” he said.

“I’m amazed on how fast animals heal in comparison to humans. And I’m amazed on some of the results that happen, where even I’m thinking well this dog may have gotten to me a little to late and they do very well, like Scruff.”

Scruff is a 13-year-old cross that was given six months to live -- it has been two years since his first treatment with Fleet and the dog “is still kicking along.”

Sam’s case, a Shih Tzu-Poodle that received an injury after jumping off a bed, surpasses all the rest.

“He was lame. He come out bad, so bad that they said he has a problem with a disc and he was supposed to have surgery.”

Sam didn’t have the operation; his owner opted for chiropractic treatment and recuperated. Fleet has had several similar cases, where dogs have been offered or received an MRI and are scheduled for surgery. They switched the operation room for chiropractic care and walked out healthy.

“Animals can sense that you are trying to help them. They seem to like to come here. Some of them that come in on a regular basis will come in from the back door and head right in the room.”

Even though animals can’t say thank you, they express their gratitude in other ways, especially horses, according to Fleet. After getting treated, horses sometimes sigh and drop their heads, lick their lips and chew.

Even though most animal patients enjoy Fleet’s work, some are not easily pleased. The chiropractor was bitten once. The bite gave him pain, but his dedication for the field remained un-tampered.

“I get tons of gratification out of it,” he said.

For hours and information, visit www.animalchiropracticcare.com