



Senate Bill 1269: Animal Chiropractic Care - Direct Access

Summary

Senate Bill 1269 would update the chiropractic scope of practice to allow Doctors of Chiropractic to deliver animal chiropractic services without the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian for the first three months or eight visits of care, if they possess a valid certification from one of the following organizations:

- American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA); or
- International Veterinary Chiropractic Association (IVCA).

Chiropractors who are not certified may continue to practice animal chiropractic under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

The bill would establish language for the State Board of Chiropractic Examiners (BCE), to regulate Doctors of Chiropractic who provide animal chiropractic services.

Existing Law

On November 7, 1922, California voters passed the Chiropractic Initiative Act of California, which created BCE, the entity that oversees the licensure and regulation of chiropractic doctors in California.¹

According to the California Code of Regulations, Title 16, Sec. 2038, a California-licensed Doctor of Chiropractic (DC) must work under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian when providing chiropractic services to animals.²

However, the California Veterinary Medical Board (CVMB) does not regulate chiropractic licenses, and because current law only allows DCs to perform animal chiropractic under the supervision of a veterinarian, this creates limitations and confusion for both BCE and CVMB.

Currently, eight states have passed laws allowing DCs to adjust animals without the direct supervision of a veterinarian:

- Oklahoma (2011)
- Colorado (2018)
- Ohio (2020)
- Utah (2021)
- Arkansas (2021)
- Nebraska (2021)
- New Hampshire (2025)
- Tennessee (2025)

Nineteen additional states are actively advancing similar legislation

Background

The ASPCA estimates that about 31 million U.S. households adopted a pet during the COVID-19 pandemic.³

This increase in pet ownership, coupled with more veterinarians retiring from the profession than graduating, has exacerbated the staffing issues that plagued the veterinary medicine industry before the pandemic.⁴

According to a 2023 study by Mars Veterinary Health, pet healthcare services spending is

¹ Chiropractic Initiative Act of California

² California Veterinary Medicine Practice Act, Page 96.

³ ASPCA, May 26, 2021

⁴ Garcia, Catherine. "The U.S. Veterinarian Shortage Crisis." The Week, July 18, 2023.

expected to increase 3-4% per year beyond inflation over the next 8-10 years.⁵

Given this situation, allowing certified DCs to adjust animals, alongside traditional veterinary medicine, will give pet owners more options when making decisions about their pet's health and well-being.

Solution

SB 1269 would add language to the Business and Professions Code to ensure that only those who have earned a DC degree and are properly licensed and certified will be allowed to administer chiropractic adjustments to animals without being under the direct supervision of a veterinarian for the first three months or eight visits of care. Upon completion of this initial period, the animals will be referred to their primary veterinarian.

In addition to a DC license, chiropractors would register with the BCE as an animal chiropractic practitioner and would maintain requirements, including certification, continuing education from one of two specified entities, and premise permits. The DC will also be required to carry malpractice insurance.

A DC who is not a certified animal chiropractic practitioner may continue to deliver animal chiropractic services under the direct supervision of a veterinarian.

Veterinarians will continue to provide primary care for companion animals. Allowing certified animal chiropractors to practice without direct supervision represents a positive contribution to the pet healthcare industry by opening another avenue for owners to access affordable care for their beloved pets.

For More Information

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Bill text and status can be found at
<http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

⁵ Mars Veterinary Health. "Tackling the Veterinary Professional Shortage." Aug. 2023.