

DC Makes Grizzly Discovery

When Dr. Kyle Goltz began practicing in November of 1999, he envisioned having patients of all ages and physiques, but certainly didn't expect that one of his patients would be an extremely hairy 10 year-old weighing in at 700 pounds.

The West Yellowstone, Montana practitioner was given the task of adjusting a grizzly bear with a neck condition. The bear in question, an Alaskan grizzly named Fred, was one of eight bears at the Grizzly Discovery Center, and had been in captivity at the facility for seven of his 10 years. It was thought that he had been injured rough housing with one or more of his playmates in an enclosure.

"They swim, they roll each other on their backs, they do every contact sport," explained Gale Ford, DVM, the center's executive director, who assisted Dr. Goltz with the procedure. Before diagnosis and treatment could begin, Dr. Ford delivered a sedative via a blowgun dart. "You have to get within 30 to 40 feet to make the shot, and you make sure you're not shooting into the wind," she warned.

The decision to contact a chiropractor to treat Fred was made "as a logical result of the bear's symptoms," said veterinarian Ford. The bear's initial treatment had consisted primarily of antibiotics, which produced no results.

"The natural connection was made between the bear's neck problem and the spine, which is where I came in," explained Dr. Goltz.

The tranquilizer took 15-20 minutes to take effect. Dr. Ford approached the bear first; then it was time for the chiropractor. "I was naturally hesitant, and maybe a bit nervous," Dr. Goltz recalled, "but I was assured that the bear was under. Every so often he would sigh, which was actually quite humorous."

Dr. Goltz, who has practiced in West Yellowstone since March 2000, has some experience adjusting animals. He assisted on an adjustment to a horse's neck, and has "worked on a few dogs and cats."

"Working on animals," he observed, "only reinforces and confirms the principle of chiropractic: that we can treat those that can't speak, and make them well."

Dr. Goltz knew he needed to do the procedure correctly the first time. "I would've liked to follow-up with the patient," he told *Dynamic Chiropractic*, "but with the risks involved with tranquilization of an animal, I wanted those to be minimal for his sake."

What was it like to examine such a mammoth patient? Dr. Goltz explained: "He was pretty easy to palpate, since there was so much muscle mass, with the vertebrae not too deep within the animal. It's much like a human's, but much bigger."

John Lewis assisted Dr. Goltz at the clinic. After assisting the animal out of a special stretcher, an x-ray was taken. "We just got him onto a ply board, slid a cassette in, and shot him from top to bottom," explained Dr. Goltz. After finding the bear's spine "twisted to one side," the doctor and assistants injected him with muscle relaxants. It was determined that the bear's fourth cervical

vertebrae was the focal point of care.

"I worked on him a little bit trying to loosen him up," recalls Dr. Goltz. He then attempted manual cervical procedures on the bear's neck, but opted to use a spinal activator gun to produce the anvil force necessary for such a large mammal. The administration of a number of firm thrusts, producing what he said was "no audible pop or click or release," although he noted that afterward, "it was apparent he had a lot more movement in the joint."

During recovery, Fred was given more muscle relaxants, mixed in with peanut butter treats. Dr. Ford declared Fred was "doing quite well," and improving noticeably. "We've really seen some marked improvement in the last several days," she noted.

The Montana Chiropractic Association, based in Helena, is researching and gathering information for possible legislation that would allow licensure and certification for doctors of chiropractic to actively participate in the treatment of animals. "Being a rural state, doctors of chiropractic are called regularly to treat large and small animals," said Mary Lou Garrett, the state association's executive director.

Dr. Goltz agrees that DCs treating animals is a much-needed specialty within the chiropractic profession.

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