

Veterinary physiotherapy

In the veterinary medical world, just as in human medicine, there are many health conditions and surgical procedures that can be helped by physiotherapy intervention

Why see a Chartered Veterinary Physiotherapist?

Chartered veterinary physiotherapists (MCSP- Member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy) are trained to degree level in human physiotherapy and then go on to further education within the veterinary field. They are governed by a strict code of practice and have a high level of expertise and knowledge to ensure that your pet receives the best possible care. Physiotherapists have a depth of core knowledge that includes anatomy and physiology, joint mechanics, applied biomechanics and disease pathophysiology. They are expert in rehabilitative exercise and are therefore qualified to provide detailed physiotherapy assessment and treatment/rehabilitation for animals with a variety of problems.

Physiotherapy is not a substitute for veterinary diagnosis. Physiotherapists liaise closely with vets and under the Vet Surgeons Act (1966) require consent from your veterinary surgeon prior to treatment.

How can physiotherapy help my pet?

Many common canine conditions and injuries respond well to physiotherapy such as:

- Hip/elbow displasia
- Osteochondrosis dissecans (OCD)
- Injuries to ligaments (e.g. Cranial cruciate disease/rupture),
- Joint problems (degenerative joint disease/arthritis, patella luxation, injury, pain, stiffness)
- Spinal conditions (disc disease,)
- Soft tissue injuries (tendon, ligament & muscle)
- Post-surgical rehabilitation
- Fractures
- Neurological conditions (fibro-cartilaginous embolism, disc prolapse)

The therapist will discuss with the owner their expectations and goals for their pet. This is re-evaluated on a regular basis depending on the condition and response to therapy. Physiotherapeutic goals will vary according to each individual case, but generally will include:

- Reduction of pain
- Improvement of mobility
- Return to pre-injury strength and flexibility
- Return to full function and performance
- Prevention of reoccurrence of injury
- Pain management
- Long term maintenance

The assessment and treatment will be individual to your pet's needs and any management advice or rehabilitative exercises will be tailor made for your dog.

What does the treatment involve?

Physiotherapy techniques include may include any of the following, depending on your dogs condition;

- Soft tissue mobilisation and massage techniques
- Joint mobilisation
- Heat and cold therapy
- Laser therapy
- Therapeutic ultrasound
- Neuromuscular electrical stimulation
- Rehabilitation
- Home exercise regimes
- Advice and management strategies

A treatment may involve just one or a combination of the above techniques. The treatment programme will be specifically designed to meet the individual needs of your pet and you will usually be provided with some exercises and/or advice to do at home.

Based on the findings of the assessment, the physiotherapist will discuss with the owner how often their pet needs to be seen, and how many sessions they may require. This may change throughout the rehabilitation process as you see your pet improving. Depending on the nature of the problem maintenance treatments can be useful to help your pet achieve a consistent level of comfort and function. Other cases require a more intense course of treatment/rehab and can be discharged from physiotherapy when the injury/condition has resolved.

For more information about veterinary physiotherapy you can visit www.ACPAT.org the website of The Association of Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy.

Or contact Sarah Clemson, Chartered Veterinary Physiotherapist

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