

Veterinary Rehabilitation



What is veterinary rehabilitation?

Veterinary rehabilitation uses targeted physical therapies (e.g., massage, therapeutic exercise, heat, cold, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation - TENS, ultrasound, laser, hydrotherapy) to improve a pet's mobility and reduce

pain.

Rehabilitation aims to return the patient to close to normal function, as quickly as possible. This includes restoring full range of movement and strength to areas of injury.

Rest is not always an effective treatment for injury, as over time, rest can lead to degeneration in muscles, tendons, ligaments, and bone.

What is the history of rehabilitation therapy in veterinary medicine?

Rehabilitation therapy has been used in non-recognized forms in animals for a long time. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, specific therapies began to be researched and recognized as effective treatment options. Formal guidelines were developed by regulatory bodies in the 1990s and early 2000s.

What species can benefit from rehabilitation therapy?

All species can potentially benefit from rehabilitation therapy. Historically, horses received the most attention, due to their important role as a working species and also as athletes. Now, rehabilitation therapy is commonly used in dogs, cats, rabbits, goats, and many other species, to improve their mobility and quality of life.



Who performs veterinary rehabilitation and is a referral needed?

Academic training in canine rehabilitation is available through many institutions, such as the University of Tennessee, the Healing Oasis Wellness Center, the Canine Rehabilitation Institute, the Chi Institute, and Curacore VET. This training is available to veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and licensed physiotherapists. Depending on the program, a practitioner who completes this training will become: a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner (CCRP), a Certified Veterinary Massage and Rehabilitation Therapist (CVMRT), a

Certified Canine Rehabilitation Therapist (CCRT), a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Veterinarian (CCRV), or a Canine Rehabilitation and Physical Medicine Therapist (CRPMT).

In many states and provinces, veterinary technicians and physiotherapists who are licensed to practice on people can only treat animals under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. Veterinarians are the only ones who can provide comprehensive, whole-body care. They will perform a complete pet health examination and make appropriate diagnostic recommendations prior to developing an appropriate treatment plan that may include rehabilitation and any needed prescription medications. To ensure your pet receives the best comprehensive care, a veterinary referral is often required for rehabilitation therapy. Your pet's veterinarian can advise you on the regulations in your area.

What conditions are most often treated with rehabilitation therapy?



Rehabilitation therapy helps patients with both acute and chronic conditions. Conditions that are treated or managed with rehabilitation include:

- cranial cruciate ligament disease
- hip dysplasia
- fracture recovery
- intervertebral disc disease
- chronic arthritis

- immune-mediated polyarthritis
- muscle, tendon, or ligament sprains or strains

Rehabilitation uses many different modalities to treat pain, improve neurologic function, and help maintain or improve joint, muscle, tendon, and ligament health.

Rehabilitation therapy is also used to maintain peak performance in canine and equine athletes.

How can my pet benefit from rehabilitation therapy?

Rehabilitation therapy has been shown to reduce pain and speed healing after an injury. Other goals of rehabilitation therapy are increased strength, endurance, and flexibility. This can help reduce the risk of future injury by reducing abnormal strain on the body from compensatory motion (what the body does to reduce pain). For example, limping due to a sore knee is a compensatory motion that causes strain in the back as well as strain to the non-painful leg.

Rehabilitation therapy is a team effort. Your pet will receive the most benefit when you help, by performing recommended exercises and treatment at home, as prescribed by your pet's rehabilitation team.

How safe is rehabilitation therapy?

Rehabilitation therapy is usually safe when performed by trained professionals. However, it can cause significant harm if it is performed by someone with inappropriate education and training, or incomplete knowledge of the pet's full medical history. For that reason, it is vitally important that rehabilitation specialists work with your pet's regular veterinarian.

What is the cost of rehabilitation therapy?

Comprehensive rehabilitation therapy requires an initial veterinary assessment and formulation of a treatment plan that includes a series of treatments. The cost of treatments will reflect the equipment required as well as the skill and experience of the practitioner and therapist. Fees are set by the individual practitioner.

Can rehabilitation therapy be combined with traditional veterinary medicine?

Rehabilitation is most appropriately used in combination with traditional, integrative, veterinary medicine. A licensed veterinarian should formulate the overall treatment plan, following diagnostic examination and assessment of the patient. Follow-up evaluations will determine the patient's response to treatment and allow the veterinarian to adjust the therapy accordingly.

In most jurisdictions, if your pet is receiving rehabilitation therapy from someone other than your regular veterinarian, that person must report directly to your veterinarian in order to provide coordinated care of your pet, to allow proper evaluation of treatment, and to minimize any avoidable interactions or interferences.

How can I find out more information about veterinary rehabilitation therapy?

Speak to your veterinary healthcare team. Your veterinarian will assist you in evaluating the suitability of specific therapy for your companion animal.

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