



ANIMAL

Physical Therapy for

The concept of physical therapy is new to animals and has evolved rapidly over the past few years into its own specialty. In the veterinary medical world, just as in human medicine, there are many surgical procedures and health conditions that require extensive physical therapy for complete recovery. Physical therapy is often indicated after surgery, injury, or disability and is an essential part of the recovery process. The goal of physical therapy and rehabilitation is to return the affected part and the animal to full function.

Physical rehabilitation in the veterinary field works much the same as it does in human medicine. Just as in human practice, recoveries from an injury or

surgery are guided by a trained rehab professional. While still a relatively new concept in veterinary medicine, the field is growing exponentially based on its real world efficacy. Veterinary surgeons and doctors alike are seeing first hand the impact comprehensive physical rehabilitation is making on the recovery of their patients and integrating it into their treatment care protocols.

While the animal rehabilitation field is growing quickly, there are still many owners and veterinarians alike who are new to the concept and have skepticism as to the necessity of its role in post-operative animal care. After all, one must remember that for years the standard of care has not

included physical rehabilitation, and animals have been left to recover on their own.

Rehabilitation can reduce the incidence of post surgical complications that can be seen with orthopedic procedures, such as quadriceps contracture in young puppy following a fracture repair. Rehabilitation can reduce the time to full recovery and result in improved recovery as well. In dogs that tear a cruciate ligament due to

degenerative arthritic changes in the knee, nearly seventy five percent will tear the other ligament in two years or less. It is important to achieve the best possible recovery from the first surgery in terms of both providing a stable leg as soon as possible so as not to stress the opposite knee, but also to provide a strong leg to stand on should the second knee need surgery at a future date.

Managing inflammation and pain are a large part of rehabilitation as well. A little bit of inflammation is necessary for the healing process, but uncontrolled pain and inflammation will lead to limb disuse and scar tissue formation. When we restrict the activity of our animals to facilitate a healing process, such as a fracture repair, there are detrimental effects on muscle and bone mass, cartilage health, tendon and ligament flexibility and strength. Rehabilitation can help prevent some of these effects and improve the end result of the surgical procedure.

Rehabilitation can help a dog re-educate neural pathways after disc surgery and improve neurological function. Animals unable to stand can benefit from neuromuscular electrical stimulation of their muscles to prevent severe muscle atrophy. If you have an older dog that is down for weeks due to an injury, the combination of arthritic pain, muscle wasting and injury are tremendous hurdles to overcome so as to be able to rise and walk again. Animals can often exercise in water to a greater degree than they could on land, thus building muscle, endurance and keeping the joints mobile.

What if your dog was not a candidate for surgery? Rehabilitation may improve the quality of life and function in these



Waggle De Tails Pet Services
"Let's Play while the Parents are Away!"

Dog Walking . Pet Sitting . Canine Massage
. Pet Taxi . All Natural Dog Treats
. Pet Photography

Serving Delaware County & Lower Montco

610-659-0578

waggledetails@aol.com

www.waggledetails.com

Gift Certificates Available

WALS

By Neil Simon

patients as well. Nearly 30-40% of all cats and 50-60% of all dogs will develop arthritis at some point in their lives. The tools of rehabilitation can improve existing function in these animals and reduce the need for medication in some cases. In most cases, rehabilitation therapy can prolong the functional time of an arthritic animal.

There are also many debilitating conditions seen in dogs that cannot be managed with medication alone. The degenerative myelopathy of German shepherd dogs is an example. In some of these cases, the progression of the disease can be slowed with a program of physical activity as well as diet and supplement management. In a study evaluating physical rehabilitation in dogs with degenerative myelopathy found that the median survival time was twice as long in patients receiving a moderate amount of therapy as it was in those receiving no therapy. Patients receiving intense physical rehabilitation had a fourfold increase in median survival time compared to those receiving no therapy. Some animals need assistance with walking or need to have an area of the body protected or supported. Rehabilitation specialists can fit your pet

with slings, splints, carts or protective boots as needed.

Pet obesity has been an epidemic for sometime now in the United States. While not every dog is climbing the A-frame in an agility competition, even the most docile couch-ridden pup can benefit from weight loss. Sometimes weight management must be addressed before a surgery can even take place. In other cases weight reduction is needed in order to reduce the chances of joint injury. Controlled exercise programs can help in these cases. Working dogs (such as service dogs or police dogs) have had a tremendous amount of time and money invested into their training and often have higher physical demands on their bodies than the average companion animal. It is often crucial in these situations that the dog return to the full range of activities or face retirement.

And as more and more people are now participating in sports-related activities with their dogs, we are seeing more injuries as well as a greater need for conditioning in these animals.

While it may not

yet be a term known in every household, physical rehabilitation for animals is quickly becoming a recognized and respected specialty that is being integrated into the standard practice of veterinary medicine. Animal physical therapy, just as in human medicine, is quickly being considered a necessary part of patient recovery, not just a luxury. As more and more clients find the benefits and rewards of animal rehabilitation, it will continue to grow and become a standard part of veterinary care.

Bucks Animal Rehabilitation Center (B.A.R.C.), located in Warrington, PA, is a full-service rehabilitation center offering hydrotherapy (underwater treadmill), therapeutic ultrasound, neuromuscular electrical stimulation, pulsed signal therapy, among other treatments. B.A.R.C. is located within the Bucks County Vets emergency animal hospital at 978 Easton Road, Warrington, PA, 18976. Patients are accepted by referral from their veterinarian. Call (215) 918-2200 to learn more or to schedule an appointment.

Marisa J. Scully
**CERTIFIED CANINE TRAINING
 AND BEHAVIOR SPECIALIST**



In-home reinforcement based training catered to the specific needs of you and your dog.

Achieving communication between people and their pets, because you both deserve it.

Phone 267.253.9273 marisa.scully@gmail.com

**CUSTOM MADE VETERINARIAN
 PRESCRIPTIONS FOR YOUR
 PET'S SPECIAL NEEDS**

**We can ship medications
 to your home**





Charlotte
Lopacki
R.Ph
Owner

- Most prescriptions filled the same day
- Medication prepared in easy to give, flavored dosage forms
- Conveniently located near Philadelphia and Montgomery county in Feasterville in Lower Bucks County

Brut is the official Budget Pharmacy working dog. He loves greeting our customers. We invite you to come in and see him.



**BUDGET PHARMACY
 AND WELLNESS CENTER**

1137 BUSTLETON PIKE FEASTERVILLE, PA 19053
 215-322-4048 www.budgetdrugrx.com
 Mon-Fri 9AM-7PM • Sat 9AM-4PM