

The Cutting Edge

Annapolis

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“Cali” learning to exercise on the Physioball for increased core strength and balance.

Canine Rehabilitation at Chesapeake Veterinary Surgical Specialists

Physical therapy has taken off in the veterinary field and is gaining recognition around the world. Clients and referring veterinarians are frequently requesting this service for their pets, especially if they have experienced physical therapy themselves.

Veterinary physiotherapy is a very interesting emerging profession that allows collaboration of physical therapists and veterinarians to practice together in a new and exciting manner. In combining these disciplines, physical therapists have an advantage in the application of treatment modalities, while veterinarians have an advantage in interpretation of canine behavior and generating a list of differential diagnoses.

Who can be a canine rehabilitation therapist?

Both veterinarians and human physical therapists can become certified in canine rehabilitation. Courses are offered at the University of Tennessee, the Canine Rehabilitation Institute in Florida, and Colorado State University. Human physical therapists and veterinarians receive the same certification. At the University of Tennessee the certification received is “CCRP” –Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner and at the Canine Rehabilitation Institute the certification for therapists and veterinarians is “CCRT”-Certified Canine Rehabilitation Therapist.

Certified veterinary technicians and therapy assistants can also become a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner or “CCRP” at the University of Tennessee or Certified Canine Rehabilitation Assistants or “CCRAs” at the Canine Rehabilitation Institute. Both canine rehabilitation courses encourage these professions to work together, even though many of the state legislatures do not yet support this collaboration. Other animals can receive physical therapy, but the teaching programs are geared towards dogs and horses.

Continued on back

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Continued from page 1

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What does a canine rehabilitation therapist do?

A canine rehabilitation therapist that is a veterinarian may diagnose and treat sprains, strains, and neurological and orthopedic conditions. Physical therapists, certified veterinary technicians, and physical therapy assistants that have received training in canine rehabilitation can have a veterinarian oversee their diagnoses and treatment plans for rehabilitation in the state of Maryland.

During the initial assessment by a canine rehabilitation therapist or practitioner, full orthopedic and neurological physical exams are performed. If the patient is referred for a specific problem diagnosed by a veterinarian, the therapist still needs to assess the entire patient for other muscle strains, ligament strains, et cetera that may be secondary to the primary diagnosis or post-operative problem. Once a complete diagnosis is made, the therapist creates a treatment plan. Treatment plans can involve exercises both at the hospital and at home. A variety of therapeutic modalities such as

cryotherapy and/or heat therapy, laser therapy, therapeutic ultrasound, neuromuscular electrical stimulation, joint manipulation, transcutaneous electrical muscle stimulation, pulse magnetic field therapy, and hydrotherapy may also be beneficial. Therapy may be for a few weeks or several months depending on the diagnosis and the patient's response.

Physical Therapy at Chesapeake Veterinary Surgical Specialists

At Chesapeake Veterinary Surgical Specialists we are now seeing our own patients for rehabilitation. Dr. Krista Evans, Diana Huey, RVT, and Julie Frenkil, RVT are in the process of completing their certification through the Canine Rehabilitation Institute course. We plan to offer therapeutic exercises, neuroelectrical stimulation, laser therapy, therapeutic ultrasound, and pulse magnetic field therapy. We also have the resources to coordinate hydrotherapy, massage therapy, and acupuncture.

Please feel free to contact Dr. Evans with any questions you have concerning physical therapy and rehabilitation.



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