

Should You Consider Canine Rehabilitation for Your Dog?

There are a lot of different ways we can help our dogs live better lives. It's sometimes hard to know which will be most effective for our dog's specific situation. If your dog is recovering from an injury or surgery, or has a mobility issue from an underlying health condition or simply old age, canine rehabilitation may be helpful. Read more to learn about canine physical rehabilitation and how it may help your dog to live an improved quality of life.

What is Canine Rehabilitation?

According to the American Association of Rehabilitation Veterinarians, canine physical rehab is "the diagnosis and management of patients with painful or functionally-limiting conditions, particularly those with injury or illness related to the neurological and musculoskeletal systems." Essentially, if your dog is having mobility issues and/or pain, they may benefit from physical rehab. This practice adapts physical therapy techniques used on humans to improve the function and mobility of joints and muscles.

The goal of physical rehab is to achieve the best quality of life with the highest level of function and independence possible while decreasing pain. It can assist with recovery from surgery, injury, age-related diseases, degenerative diseases, and obesity.

Rebuild

Within two weeks of an injury, the body loses strength and conditioning. Physical rehab works to rebuild this loss of strength, much like a human physical therapist does, through a variety of techniques and treatments. Pain management is an essential part of this process.

Retrain

The body compensates for weak, injured, and diseased areas, leading to abnormal function and increasing the risk for re-injury or a new injury. Physical rehab retrains nerves and muscles to move as designed, enabling your dog to function better and decreasing the risk of further injury.

Renew

Improve your dog's quality of life by addressing issues from aging, injury, and disease. By improving flexibility, strength, and balance, your dog can gain function, independence, and happiness.

Why You Should Choose a Vet with Rehab Training

All vets learn about the mechanics of a dog's body, including the musculoskeletal system. The Canine Rehabilitation Institute provides additional training for veterinary professionals worldwide for canine rehabilitation. Their certification, Canine Rehabilitation Therapist (CCRT), provides the standard for initial and ongoing continuing education. With this certification, you know your vet has the training required to safely and effectively help your dog.

With this advanced training in mobility-specific issues including managing and preventing them, CCRTs have advanced knowledge in pain management, strengthening and conditioning, stretching and flexibility, the use of assistive devices, and maximizing your dog's physical potential. With this training, vets can evaluate dogs from a functional standpoint, looking at the specific areas as well as the whole to provide the best treatment for your dog.

Treatments and Therapies

There are many different modalities and treatment methods rehab vets use. Here are some of the most common:

- **Therapeutic exercises** — Your dog is guided through exercises in the gym and will get a home-exercise program including many of the same activities. They sometimes utilize specialized equipment to focus on strength and balance.
- **Thermotherapy** — The use of heat or cold to promote healing, reduce inflammation, and increase tissue elasticity.
- **Therapeutic massage** — Increase circulation to improve healing, reduce swelling, enhance relaxation, and decrease pain.
- **Manual therapy** — Hands-on therapies including muscle trigger point release, traction, myofascial release, and joint mobilizations.
- **Balance and proprioception retraining** — Improving core strength and body awareness using a variety of exercises and techniques to reduce the risk of injury and build the necessary proper conditioning for the rest of the body.
- **Cold-laser therapy** — The use of low-level laser light to relieve arthritis symptoms, decrease muscle and joint pain, relax muscle spasms, and increase blood flow for healing.
- **Neuromuscular electrical stimulation** — Stimulate muscle tissue to contract with the use of an electrical current.
- **Pulsed electromagnetic field therapy** — Reduce soreness from injury or arthritis or stimulate healing through the use of electromagnetic energy.
- **Orthotics and prosthetics** — Some dogs may benefit from items like custom-fitted splints, carts, braces, or artificial limbs. rehab can focus on retraining movement with their use.

- **Hydrotherapy** — Use of an underwater treadmill or swimming pool therapies that provide buoyancy and water resistance in a controlled environment.

These treatments may be used independently or in conjunction with each other under the guidance of a trained rehab vet. There are other treatments available and your rehab vet will determine a treatment plan that is customized to your dog's specific needs.

Canine rehabilitation can be a helpful and effective way to improve your dog's quality of life. Many of the principles and treatments that are used in humans are equally effective in dogs. It makes sense, and it can be a great way to help our best friend to live their best life possible.

If you'd like to learn more about rehab to see if it might be beneficial for your dog, please contact me at drsonnet@azcaninerehab.com. I'm here to help.

Sources:

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Email: Since you're on my email list, you may know a thing or two about canine physical rehab. If you'd like to know more about what it is, the treatments and therapies used, and how it can benefit your dog, check out my new blog post that will tell you all about it.

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There are a lot of different ways we can help our dogs to live their best lives and canine physical rehab is one of them. Want to know more about it and if it could benefit your dog? Read my recent blog post to learn more and please contact me at drsonnet@azcaninerehab.com if you have any questions. I'm here to help!