

WHY NOT PHYSIO?  
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The animal industry has always been closely akin to the human field of medicine in many aspects. Surgical and diagnostic procedures, techniques, and equipment developed for humans are swift to appear in veterinary practice shortly thereafter. Many medicines are developed, tested, and put into common use in the veterinary field, to eventually become human pharmaceutical options in the future. The two fields have always been closely related. So, why not physio as well?

Animals develop similar pathologies to humans (e.g. arthritis, cruciate tears, ruptured discs, back or neck pain), their basic physiology is the similar, and their anatomy is remarkably similar as well. Given these factors they respond just as well to physiotherapy techniques and modalities, and often do so faster than humans do! Who hasn't seen a dog with a limp, one who has troubles getting up from lying or sitting, or another that has had a recent joint surgery? If it were you, you'd seek help from a physical therapist!

What's involved with physio? Physical therapists have numerous 'tricks up their sleeve'. They have a unique, in depth assessment model that allows them to not only look at the problem area, but at all of the inter-related areas that are affecting function and movement. They have the most in-depth knowledge and training in modalities (e.g. such as ultrasound, laser and electrical muscle stimulation, to name a few) than any other practitioner. Application of this equipment must be precise in order to accomplish goals such as injury healing, wound healing, or muscle retraining. Physical therapists also know a great deal of techniques in manual therapy. This is hands-on treatment to joints and muscles to gain more movement, better movement or pain free movement. Mobilizations, manipulations, massage, stretching and range of motion are all subcategories of manual therapy. Last but not least is exercise. It is often the most important part of any rehabilitation program. Specific exercises tailored to the injury in question can make a significant effect on any dog's recovery. Sometimes exercises are led by the therapist, some are prescribed for a home program, and sometimes water can be utilized as with the use of an underwater treadmill! The science of physical therapy has so much to offer the healing of neurological and musculoskeletal disabilities. It can be utilized in more cases than are commonly thought of!

When it comes to physio (or what is commonly termed as 'rehabilitation' when used on animals), you want to find a qualified person. Physical therapists, veterinarians, vet techs and physical therapy assistants are the only ones allowed to take training in animal rehab courses. Make sure that the person you trust with the rehab of your animal has the proper qualifications. And the next time you see your pet looking uncomfortable, stiff, or after a joint surgery, ask your veterinarian about physio. Chances are it could help!

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