

PHYSIOTHERAPY- A BASIC GUIDE

Physiotherapy is becoming much more widely used in Veterinary practice, its uses and benefits have already been proven in human medicine and surgery.

Basic massage and stretching can be a crucial part of recovery post surgery or for daily mobilisation of joints for conditions such as Arthritis, sprains and injuries to tendons.

Before you begin any form of massage on your pet it is important to have a basic understanding of the muscles involved in the areas you wish to work on and how they move the limb.

Basic, most used muscles of the hind limb include

- ❖ **GLUTEALS** - a group of 3 muscles on the outer thigh/rump area, they extend the hip joint and abduct the thigh
- ❖ **QUADRICEPS** - split into 4 parts, runs down the front of the thigh and extends the stifle joint
 - ❖ **PECTINEUS** - from the groin to inner thigh, adducts the limb
- ❖ **HAMSTRINGS** - 3 muscles at the back of the thigh, used to propel and extend the limb - i.e. when the animal is running

Various muscles flex and extend the stifle, hock and digits.

Basic, most used muscles of the forelimb include

- ❖ **PECTORALS** - from the chest to the armpit, adduct the limb
- ❖ **LATISSIMUS DORSI** - very large muscle which retracts the forelimb
 - ❖ **TRAPEZIUS** - another large muscle which pulls the leg forward
 - ❖ **BICEPS BRACHII** - flexes the elbow and extends the shoulder
 - ❖ **TRICEPS BRACHII** - extends the elbow and flexes the shoulder

Various muscles then flex and extend the carpus and digits.

Basic Massage Techniques

STROKING

Gentle, flowing movements of the hands over the limb, working from the top of the limb to the toes. Alternate hands glide over the limb - not breaking contact with the skin every 3-6 seconds. This technique enables the animal to get used to being touched, relaxes them and helps reduce muscle tone. The movement may be calm or brisk depending on what's required. Use at the beginning and end of each physio session.

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Basic Massage Techniques

EFFLEURAGE

Another stroking movement going from the toes up towards the heart, every 5-6 seconds. Using even pressure and cupping the hands in glide over the limb, pressure can be adjusted accordingly. This technique helps to reduce swelling and stretch tight muscle fibres.

Other more complicated forms of massage include kneading, squeezing, wringing and skin rolling. All these techniques involve using the finger tips or palms of the hand and applying different amounts of pressure to the area. They can relieve tension on the muscles, increase blood flow to the muscle and improve movement in the muscles and any scar tissue.

All these techniques are slightly more complicated than the massage therefore need to be demonstrated before you can apply them.

YOU MUST NEVER USE PHYSIOTHERAPY IF:

- ❖ There is sudden inflammation or swelling in the area
 - ❖ Broken bones are involved
 - ❖ Infectious disease is present
 - ❖ Fever
 - ❖ Shock
 - ❖ Skin conditions such as ringworm
 - ❖ Open wounds/sores/bruising
 - ❖ Cancer

Glossary of terms used

ABDUCT - move the limb away from the body (i.e. a dog cocking his leg)

ADDUCT - hold the limb close to the body

CARPUS - wrist

DIGITS - toes

EXTEND - increases the angle of a joint (i.e. straightening of the elbow)

FLEX - decreases the angle of the joint (i.e. bending the elbow)

HOCK - ankle

STIFLE - knee

The techniques described in this leaflet are a guide only - it is advisable to have a demonstration of the techniques before using them.
Advice for individual cases is available at the surgery, please phone to make an appointment.