



Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy is a therapy using warm water, purpose built and appropriately heated hydrotherapy pools, underwater treadmills, water jets and hot spas. The aim of hydrotherapy is to improve the animal's mobility, rate of healing and range of movement. Careful use of hydrotherapy alongside other rehabilitation and physiotherapy treatment can significantly help with rehabilitation and speed up the process of healing and restoration of function and fitness.

Rehabilitation, physiotherapy and hydrotherapy have moved on in recent years and more and more vets are now getting personally involved with rehabilitation. The use of underwater treadmills is becoming very popular as a more readily available method of using water for rehabilitation than a large expensive swimming pool with all of the plant that that requires. In addition, there are often wider physiotherapy services available alongside hydrotherapy.

Swimming / wading (on a treadmill) is an excellent form of exercise as most of the muscles used in movement are involved but without the stresses caused by motion on hard land. When on land, each foot step creates a shock wave which travels up the leg to be absorbed by bones, joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons. Whilst some stress is normal and necessary to maintain healthy bones and joints, severe or repetitive impact can adversely affect limbs and joints that are recovering from surgery or injury. Degenerate ("arthritic") joints are especially vulnerable to adverse consequences from impact. Hydrotherapy in a pool or using an underwater treadmill allows exercise, movement of joints and the strengthening of muscles whilst avoiding this potentially damaging concussion. In addition, because of the increased resistance to movement offered by water, the muscles have to work harder than they would on land when they are only working against air resistance and friction.

Hydrotherapists should make rehabilitation as fun and as stress free as possible for their patients. It is quite common for owners to continue with hydrotherapy for their pets long after the healing process has taken place, (although pet insurance companies will usually only pay for rehabilitation treatment).

First question: "Does my pet need hydrotherapy?"

Some cases really benefit markedly from hydrotherapy - eg femoral head and neck excision.
Many cases can benefit from hydrotherapy - eg cruciate surgery
But in some cases, hydrotherapy is specifically NOT recommended eg total hip replacement.

The aftercare sheet we will have given you very often specifies whether hydrotherapy is recommended after the surgery your pet has had. It will often have been discussed during the consultation. The wounds must be well healed before hydrotherapy, and this means no hydrotherapy at least until we've seen you at 2-3 weeks post-op. We see almost every case back at this time. If in doubt, ask us!

Second question: "Where should I get hydrotherapy?"

The hydrotherapy industry is unregulated - meaning just about anyone can set themselves up as a hydrotherapist. Skills, experience and facilities vary widely.

Ask your own vet as they will know about the hydrotherapy centres close to you!

In addition, there are two organisations that hydrotherapy centres can voluntarily submit themselves to for assessment, which includes assessing their cleanliness and standards of hygiene. These are the Canine Hydrotherapy Association (CHA), www.canine-hydrotherapy.org and the National Association of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists (NARCH), <http://www.narch.org.uk>.

There are two good options for getting quality hydrotherapy and physiotherapy local to Lichfield with veterinary supervision. While many centres continue to do a good job without veterinary staff on the premises, centres that have veterinary staff involved with the rehabilitation are able to offer a more refined and involved rehabilitation service.

Pool House Veterinary Hospital are located in a rural on the southwest side of Lichfield. They are a large well established general practice with an excellent reputation giving a very good service at sensible prices. Their lead hydrotherapist is a Registered Veterinary Nurse who is involved in the advanced training of other hydrotherapists.

www.mobilitymattershydro.co.uk

Emma Poore is a veterinary surgeon with special interest and expertise in physiotherapy and rehabilitation. Emma runs her own general practice, the Star Veterinary Clinic at Appleby Magna. Her clinic is also in a rural setting on a small industrial park but it is very modern and she has invested heavily in quality equipment right from the off, including a water treadmill and gait analysis mat. Emma sees a heap of agility and working dogs, and rehabilitation is her passion! She is involved in the training of other rehabilitation practitioners.

www.starclinicrehab.co.uk

For further information, please contact us at www.wm-referrals.com or on 01543 414248 or 07944 105501