

Physiotherapy exercises for spinal patients. The following exercises should be done 2-3 times daily:

- **Massage** - Ideally have your pet lying on their side for this. Start from the foot and work upwards to the hips, massaging the leg using strokes or small circular movements. Repeat this several times. If possible, apply a heat pack to the hind limbs for 10 minutes before massaging to warm up the muscles, relieve any tension and therefore enable better movement of the legs during the exercises. **Heat should not be applied over the surgical site for at least 72 hours after the surgery.** Massage should continue for 10 minutes. Massage encourages circulation, transporting fresh blood and nutrients to the muscles and removing waste products. It is important that massage starts at the foot, working upwards towards the lymph nodes.
- **Range of movement exercises for joints** – These are best done with your pet lying down, but they can be done if your pet is supported in the standing position. Start at the toes and work up towards the hips. Each joint should be flexed for 30 seconds then extended for 30 seconds and this should be repeated 10 times.
- **Bicycling** - Move the limb as if your pet was riding a bicycle. This can be done in either the standing or the lying position. If performing this in a standing position, allow good contact between the foot and the ground to send sensory feedback from the feet to the brain to promote sensory awareness. Repeat bicycling several times in each session.
- **Foot circling** – Whilst your pet is supported in a standing position, move the hind feet in a clockwise and then in an anti-clockwise movement. Repeat this several times. This is a good exercise to use on different surfaces and is used for neurological re-training.
- **Weight-shifting** - Whilst your pet is supported in a standing position with all feet square on the ground, gently rock the hindquarters from side to side and front to back. Repeat this several times. This encourages muscle activity and encourages your pet to make decisions and corrections for where its body is in space.
- **Assisted walking** - Until your pet can support themselves, walk them with a towel used as a sling under the abdomen to support them while they try to walk. Walking should be controlled and slow to ensure that all limbs are used and to give time to make decisions and corrections for where the limbs and the body are in space. It may be necessary in the early stages to place your pet's feet down on the ground for them in the correct manner if they have poor proprioception. This is also used for neurological retraining and assisted walking is best done over different surfaces- carpet, grass, cushions, bubble wrap, bark chippings, gravel which will stimulate the feet and send sensory feedback to the brain to promote sensory awareness. Using a "scrunchie bobble" on the feet when walking will also help with sensory stimulation.
- **Massage** - The physiotherapy session should finish with massage and fresh drinking water should be provided.

As your pet has not been weight bearing on certain limbs, often the hind limbs, other muscles in the body have been compensating for this and will have been over used and may well be tense. It is important that these muscles are also treated. Applying a heat pad and massage to the neck, shoulder, upper fore limbs and back muscles will relieve any tension.

Put baby socks on hind feet to encourage better circulation and to provide warmth to the hind limb muscles, these should be left on all the time apart from when performing massage and exercises

If at any point your pet is showing signs of discomfort the session should end. For further advice of information, please ring 07944 105501 or contact us via mail@wm-referrals.com