



Southern Counties

VETERINARY  
SPECIALISTS

# What is animal physiotherapy?

Information Sheet

**Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists  
Specialist Referral Service**



### **What is physiotherapy?**

Physiotherapy, or physical rehabilitation, is the treatment of illness or injury to restore function and decrease pain. The clinical benefits of physiotherapy are now increasingly acknowledged by members of the veterinary profession, with several leading UK veterinary referral centres now employing teams of veterinary physiotherapists to treat animals that have undergone surgery and/or treatment for a wide variety of problems including; cranial cruciate ligament disease, neurological complications such as intervertebral disc disease or soft tissue injury such as iliopsoas strain and bicipital tendonitis. At SCVS we have a team of dedicated veterinary physiotherapists, hydrotherapists, and physiotherapy assistants.

### **What are the benefits of physiotherapy?**

Benefits of physiotherapy include; reduced pain, increased cardiovascular fitness, promotion and restoration of normal movement patterns, maintenance or increased muscle flexibility and strength and improved joint mobility. Evidence to support these benefits is available from a wide variety of empirical sources demonstrating the improved outcome in patients that have experienced a musculoskeletal injury, orthopaedic surgery or a neurological insult. Furthermore, studies also demonstrate the beneficial long-term effects of physiotherapy on patients with osteoarthritis and other acute and chronic inflammation processes, with a further significant role within the fields of injury prevention and health promotion.



## What does physiotherapy treatment involve?

Techniques that are commonly employed by therapists to treat and enhance recovery often include modalities such as electrotherapy (e.g. low level light/laser therapy, ultrasound, neuromuscular electrical stimulation etc.), targeted exercise to strengthen and regain function in muscles groups and other soft tissues that may have atrophied or lost flexibility due to disuse, and various manual techniques such as massage and joint mobilisations which help to maintain joint flexibility and overall quality of movement. Our team of physiotherapists also provide education and advice on how patients can steadily improve/maintain physical function so that they can resume/continue their working lives and recreational activities in an effective, pain free manner.

## What does physiotherapy at SCVS involve?

Physiotherapy is routinely carried out on both inpatients and outpatients at SCVS, treating both cats and dogs. Our inpatients are seen by the therapy team three times per day and an individual rehabilitation plan is designed and adjusted on a daily basis depending on the needs of the animal at the time. The therapy team work closely alongside the specialist clinicians and nursing staff to offer a holistic approach to treatment, where inpatients are taken to our quiet physiotherapy suite to promote a stress free experience.

Our therapy team also support the clinicians at the time of discharge providing information and appropriate walking assistance aids or harnesses where needed, as well as detailed information on the ongoing therapy needs of the animal.



Alongside this we run an outpatient service; an initial consultation with one of our veterinary physiotherapists involves detailing a clinical history and a thorough assessment of your animal. Treatment may then be undertaken, with all animals being prescribed an individualised home exercise programme. Your animal may also be referred to hydrotherapy to commence sessions in the underwater treadmill, depending on the condition being treated and the patient's presentation. The number of treatments needed or how long your animal will need to attend physiotherapy will depend on a case by case basis.



[www.scvetspecialists.co.uk](http://www.scvetspecialists.co.uk)

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