



PHYSIOTHERAPY MANAGEMENT OF: SPINAL SURGERY/ BACK PAIN

Spinal injury and back pain is very common in the dog. This may be due to degeneration of the spine affecting the joints or intervertebral discs, or following an acute injury/trauma affecting the nerves/spinal cord. Your veterinarian surgeon may recommend surgery or conservative management depending on the neurological and investigative findings in the examination. It is important to have an assessment early following the injury/symptoms to maximise the prognosis. Surgery may not be appropriate due to the risk/age of the dog or concurrent conditions and conservative management may be recommended. Physiotherapy can be very beneficial in assisting in recovery and maximising quality of life.

In human literature, there is vast evidence to support the use of Physiotherapy to maximise healing and recovery with back pain. Pain, swelling and inflammation results in inhibition of the deep stability muscles. Despite resolution of pain and normal movement, these muscles do not automatically recover, resulting in muscle imbalance and reduced support to the joints. This over time leads to further stress and strain and recurrence of injury.

Following surgery it is important to allow the injury to heal and for your dog to have strict rest for 4-6 weeks (crate rest will be recommended). Full healing can take more than 12 months and in some cases, may result in a degree of paralysis or ataxia. In this time a gentle home physiotherapy program will help provide pain relief, improve mobility, stability, strength and maximise your dog's recovery. Advice to you as the owner is vital to their success. It is important to begin physiotherapy as soon as possible after surgery or injury (even Day 1 in hospital). This must be performed pain free and completely guided by your Physiotherapist.

PHYSIOTHERAPY BENEFITS:

- **Reduce pain/muscle spasm**
- **Improve healing**
- **Restore normal passive range of movement**
- **Muscle re-education – normalise muscle tone and balance**
- **Assist functional return to activities**
- **Prevent or minimise complications**
- **Improve proprioception (joint position sense)**
- **Improve core stability**
- **Increase strength in a controlled manner**
- **Gait re-education**

- **Manage and improve quality of life when poor prognosis of recovery of paralysis e.g. provision of wheel chair/aides where appropriate**
- **Education to manage at home and maximise recovery**

Physiotherapy uses a vast combination of techniques to aid recovery. This may include gentle manual therapy/mobilisation, massage, stretches, acupuncture, balance and stability exercises, gait re-education, underwater treadmill training, hydrotherapy, controlled strengthening and proprioceptive retraining or bracing/taping. An extensive home program will be given to help maximise your dog's recovery and this must be performed PAINFREE. Every dog is unique and should be treated as such when designing a program – **there is no formula!**

WHEN?

Treatment should begin as soon as possible after an injury/surgery, preferably in early stages to reduce pain, aid healing, and maximise recovery. Day 1 post spinal surgery Physiotherapy can be offered as an inpatient.

Physiotherapy is not just about exercise – we are experts at acute management of injuries also. Therefore, it is vital to maximise the speed of your dog's recovery to make sure he/she safely gets back to appropriate exercises and therefore limit any secondary complications.

CONSULTATION

Holistic Animal Physiotherapy will provide a thorough assessment (1 hour – 1.5hr), including hands-on/manual assessment and treatment from nose to tail, acupuncture, advice and provision of home program (including provision of appropriate stability exercises). We can also provide advice to help manage your dog at home with confinement, (as this can be stressful for the human and dog) and tailor your program to your needs. We are available for advice for ongoing management at any stage. Following consultations are 30 mins-45 mins. Underwater treadmill/laser packages are also available.

LOOKING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Please visit www.holisticanimalphysio.com.au / Facebook (holistic animal physiotherapy)/Instagram (brookeanimalphysio). Call Brooke (0408 022 660) to make an appointment or ask any questions you may have.

BROOKE MARSH (BPhty, MAnimSt, Member APA, APG)

Masters Animal Studies (Physiotherapy)

Titled APA Physiotherapist

www.holisticanimalphysio.com.au

ABN: 83955104851

@ brookephysio@gmail.com

☎ 0408 022 660