

CANINE HYDROTHERAPY

Nearly all dogs love nothing more than a dip in a stream or a splash in a puddle but not many people realise the full benefits of swimming dogs, formally known as canine hydrotherapy.

Hydrotherapy has been proven to be the best form of rehabilitation and can be used to treat many conditions, such as arthritis, cruciate repair, obesity, hip replacement, spinal disease/ injuries, fractures, paralysis, tendon and ligament injuries, stiffness, hip/elbow displacia to name but a few.

What is hydrotherapy?

Hydrotherapy is the external use of water in the treatment of disease and injury, through exercise in pools. It is a non-stressful medium for the application or reduction of heat. It's healing qualities were discovered over five thousand years ago. Water's healing properties are the oldest, cheapest and safest methods for treating common ailments.

Swimming in warm water (pools should be heated to a temperature of 28C) helps to relieve pain, relax and stretch muscles and improve circulation. The warm water expands the blood vessels and allows more blood and hence more oxygen to flow around the body, right to the extremities. This improved circulation helps prevent muscle cramps and promotes relaxation and rest. The skin temperature is raised, which decreases the pain and muscle spasm. Hydrostatic pressure moves fluid away and thus reduces any swelling. Swimming sessions also provide mental stimulation and help depression in a dog who has restricted movement.

The pressure of the water squeezes the chest making each breath harder to draw. The muscles involved in breathing work harder and the heart must beat faster to accommodate the extra oxygen required by the body, while exercising. Thus the heart muscles build up and the circulatory and respiratory systems are improved.

Hydrotherapy is the only form of non-weight bearing exercise, because of this hydrotherapy does not cause stress or injury to joints. It also encourages the dog to use the affected joint to a greater extent than it would doing normal exercise. Hydrotherapy is often the only form of exercise allowed during the first few weeks after an operation. Another plus is that it uses a great deal of energy and exercises every muscle of the anatomy.

When hydrotherapy is practised by experienced individuals the dog can begin a carefully monitored and controlled treatment programme. Over a number of sessions the dog can begin to use the affected joint, improve mobility, regain muscle tone and return to pre operative fitness level and normal use of the leg.

Your dog does not have to be ill to enjoy the benefits of hydrotherapy. Swimming is useful for fit and healthy dogs as a different form of exercise and to build up stamina and muscle strength. Contact: Laura Browne, Merrylegs Pet Resort & Care Centre Tel. 913351835 or 913289462

Happy paddling!

Protect your pet with knowledge

Jan Cobley

Copyright © Paws 4 Pets 2006