

What to expect at the taster session

The hydrotherapy nurse will discuss your pet's condition with you and observe its movement around the hydrotherapy room or car park. The nurse will examine your pet for signs of weakness and reductions in normal ranges of movement and will take measurements that can be used as a comparison at the end of the treatment course.

The nurse will then fit your pet with a harness or life jacket and introduce your pet to the treadmill - most pets are a little nervous to begin with but get used to the equipment quickly. The nurse will always accompany your pet onto the treadmill during the taster session for safety reasons. Sometimes food or toys are used to encourage an animal onto the treadmill.

Walking through water expends approximately 3-4 times the amount of energy that would be used on dry land so very short intervals of exercise will be undertaken at the first session, with short rest breaks in between.

The water in the treadmill is warmed up to somewhere between 25 and 30°C depending on the patient and external environmental temperature. The water is filtered and cleansed in a similar way to a swimming pool so it won't cause any problems if your pet drinks some!

Your hydrotherapy nurse may also demonstrate to you some physiotherapy techniques that can be used to promote your pet's recovery.

It is normal for your pet to appear tired following a hydrotherapy session and they may experience some mild stiffness the morning following a session. Please inform us if you are worried about your pet's condition after a session.

Follow up sessions

After their taster session most animals will be able to continue hydrotherapy sessions without needing the nurse to help them in the chamber however, some pets and especially cats do better with a little assistance.

The hydrotherapy nurse will tailor a programme of aquatic exercise to your pet's individual condition, altering the depth and temperature of the water to suit your pet, as well as making adjustments to speed and the incline of the treadmill belt.

The amount of exercise your pet does is usually gradually increased at each session as your pet's stamina improves.

The hydrotherapy nurse will observe your pet's movement and posture during the sessions and may use aids such as floats, weights and slings in order to help improve their gait.

We normally recommend a course of 10 sessions followed by a free of charge check up with an Avonvale vet. Sometimes ongoing sessions are required to maintain the improvement, especially with longer term and degenerative joint conditions.

Things to remember

- Ensure pet has toileted
- Ensure pet not eaten within 4 hours of session
- Please bathe dogs legs prior to session if dirty
- Please bring a towel to your appointments



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Hydrotherapy



Introduction

Hydrotherapy has a history covering thousands of years and its use has been documented by ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians. The literal meaning of hydrotherapy is 'water healing'.

Hydrotherapy has been shown to encourage a more rapid return to normal function and a better overall end result following orthopaedic surgery such as cruciate repairs and spinal surgeries.

Hydrotherapy also benefits non-surgical conditions such as arthritis and degenerative joint disease and can aid in fitness training and weight loss programmes.

Traditionally water treadmills have been used for racehorses and racing greyhounds but now Veterinary Surgeons are recognising its advantages for rehabilitation and fitness in companion animals. Even cats benefit from hydrotherapy and will surprisingly tolerate the water!

Water has many effects which may benefit patients:

Buoyancy - the upward buoyancy of the water allows patients to exercise in an upright position without placing full weight on their joints. Reduced weight bearing reduces the stress and pain to joints. As a result range of movement is improved and swelling and stiffness are reduced

Resistance - resistance is much greater in water than in air so a pet will have to work harder to move through it, thereby strengthening muscles. Viscosity of the water also helps support joints.

Hydrostatic pressure - the water provides a constant pressure around the patient's body and limbs which helps reduce swelling and oedema (fluid accumulation). Hydrostatic pressure is also believed to provide some pain relieving properties.

Density - a lean dog will float less than an overweight pet (just as fat or oil floats on top of water). Very lean pets may need additional buoyancy aids such as lifejackets.

Surface tension - a pet will have to work harder to break the surface water due to the tension so strength is improved

Benefits of aquatic therapy

Improves

- Quality of life/psychological well-being
- Metabolic rate
- Circulation
- Balance and stability
- Gait and posture
- Muscle mass/strength
- Cardio-respiratory fitness and endurance
- Range of joint movement
- Tone in 'floppy' or hypotonic body parts
- Agility
- Weight loss

Decreases

- Inflammation/swelling
- Load bearing on painful structures
- Pain
- Muscle atrophy
- Muscle spasm and hypertonicity (rigid body parts)

Patients with these conditions will benefit from hydrotherapy

- Healed/stable fractures
- Before and after cruciate / stifle surgery
- After hip replacements / excision arthroplasty
- Before and after spinal surgery
- Ongoing arthritic problems
- Osteoarthritis
- Degenerative joint disease
- Hip / elbow dysplasia
- Spondylosis / lumbo-sacral disease
- Following nerve damage
- Unfit or overweight pets

Contraindications for hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy is not always suitable for pets and would not be recommended if your pet is suffering from any of the following conditions:

- Behavioural problems / aggression
- Heart disease
- Pulmonary (lung) disease
- Infections (skin, gastro-intestinal, respiratory)
- Open or draining surgical wounds
- Unstable fractures
- Pyrexia (fever/elevated temperature)
- Faecal incontinence
- Extremely obese patients
- Patients with external fracture fixators
- Precaution with ear disease.
- Precaution with other concurrent diseases such as epilepsy, kidney or liver problems

All pets must have a thorough physical examination by their vet before embarking upon hydrotherapy. Our Hydrotherapy Nurses are specially trained to tailor a programme of aquatic exercise for your pet's individual condition.

We recommend an initial Taster Session where your pet will be gently introduced to the water treadmill and can get used to the new experience.

Initial Hydrotherapy session, Assessment and examination £54.95

Please contact our Wellesbourne Surgery to make your appointment

