MOBILITY PROGRAM
by vetoquinol

FOR A RECOVERED FLEXIBILITY

REHABILITATION EXERCISES GUIDE

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YOU HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT YOUR PET HAS OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease that causes pain and loss of mobility, especially in the joints that support the pet's weight, such as elbows, hips and knees. It occurs in both dogs and cats and is most common in our older pets but may occur in younger pets.

MANAGE ARTHRITIC PAIN

Although there is no cure for osteoarthritis, there are many ways that we can manage arthritic pain, improve joint mobility and restoring quality of life for the pet. We can use chondroprotectants (supplements that protect the cartilage) and anti-inflammatory medications, promote weight loss to help the pet maintain an ideal body weight, and develop exercise programs that include proprioception training, stretching, range of motion, massage and strengthening of the joints and muscles.

ARTHRITIC PET

In the case of the arthritic pet, exercise should be moderate, avoiding excessive jumping, fetching and running that may further damage the cartilage. Controlled walking is one of the best exercises for an arthritic pet as it helps to maintain cartilage health, muscle mass and joint movement.

Before performing the exercises, we encourage you to work closely with your veterinary team to help your pet become the best it can be!

To view these rehabilitation exercises in video format, please go to the following address:
www.youtube.com/vetoquinolcanada

VIDEO 1
Osteoarthritis: definition, management and proprioception exercises

VIDEO 2
Passive exercises

VIDEO 3
Basic therapeutic exercises

VIDEO 4
Advanced therapeutic exercises

1ST CATEGORY: PASSIVE EXERCISES

PASSIVE RANGE OF MOTION

PROM...

... involves moving joints through a full range of motion, with no active muscle contractions by the pet. The pet simply lies there while the handler gently extends and flexes its joints.

... has many benefits: it increases blood flow and lymphatic function and thus decreasing joint stiffness.

... will also improve the flexibility of muscles and tendons and is indicated for pets with arthritis or those who need increased mobility.

PROM

Cold muscles and joints do not move very well, so it is very important to warm up the limbs before doing these exercises. Take the pet for a slow 3-4 minute walk, apply heat or gently massage the muscles before PROM exercises.

1

Starting at the lower extremities, move the toes by flexing and extending them **passively.**

2

Next move up to the hock. With one hand, stabilize the leg above the joint and with the other hand, gently begin to flex and extend the hock to the point of resistance. Repeat 8-9 more times.

ONLY FLEX TO WHAT THE ANIMAL CAN TOLERATE

3

Then onto the knee. In order to isolate the knee joint, support the upper thigh with your left hand, and hold the lower leg immediately below the knee with your other hand.

4

Now comes the hip. Pull the leg forward to flex the hip joint (A) and then move the leg backwards to extend the hip joint (B).

PROM

5

Now move onto the front legs. The toes are flexed (A) and extended (B) the same as those of the back legs.

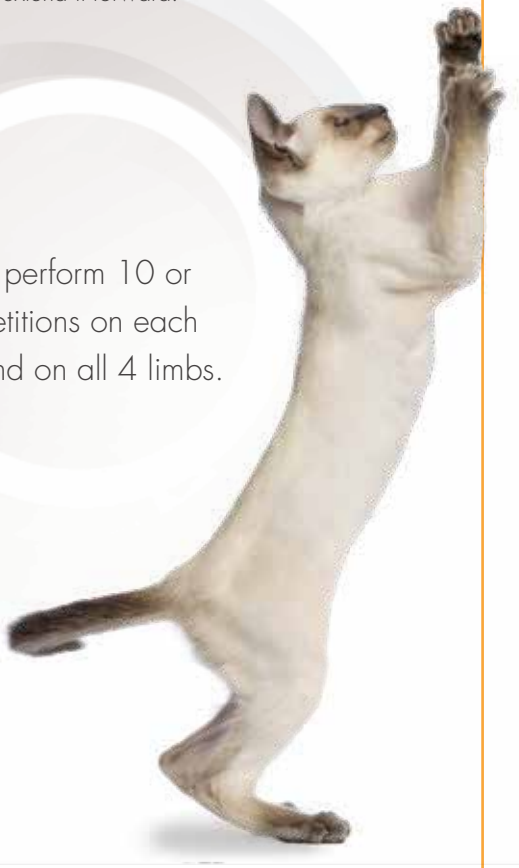
6

Next move up to the elbow. Be careful to only flex and extend the elbow to what the dog will tolerate and this is where you hold the elbow for 5-10 seconds.

7

Now let's move up to the shoulder. Here, flex it back and then extend it forward.

Ideally perform 10 or so repetitions on each joint and on all 4 limbs.



Passive exercises can also be performed on cats but it is often easier if you have an assistant to gently stroke and hold onto the cat as you perform all the same range of motion exercises that you do on their canine counterparts. The process is the same with all joints being extended and flexed to their comfortable limit.

2ND CATEGORY:

THERAPEUTIC EXERCISES

An exercise is considered to be active when an animal is contracting its own muscles to create movement of a limb or its body.

Muscle contraction is quintessential to building muscle mass.

Strong muscles go a long way to protect and stabilize an arthritic joint, allowing it to perform better. So, let's help your pet develop some solid muscles!

When performing a therapeutic exercise, it is important to insure that movements are done slowly and precisely. These therapeutic exercises are considered basic and appropriate for patients with osteoarthritis, but can be used for any pet that needs to strengthen their muscles and tendons.

Once again, cold muscles and joints do not move very well, so it is very important to warm up the limbs before doing these exercises. Take the pet for a 3-4 minute walk, apply heat or gently massage the muscles.

WITHDRAWAL REFLEX

This exercise is called the Withdrawal Reflex. It requires the dog to pull back his paw both as a reflex and also as a voluntary movement. It is performed by tickling or running our fingers between the toes.

GIVE THE PAW

Ask your pet to give his paw. You will often need a treat to reward this behavior. He contracts his upper and lower arm muscles as he lifts his paw into your hand. He is using his muscles without weight bearing on this limb.

You can make this exercise a bit more difficult by raising your hand higher or moving it further away to make him flex and extend his limb even more.

WEIGHT TRANSFER

The easiest is to have the pet stand up and gently push the hips from the left to the right to shift weight from side to side without lifting either leg.

The next level of weight transfer is to push the pet's hips with enough force to make them step to the side and then have them step back in the opposite direction.

Once he is able to perform the hip sways, the dog can move up to three-legged stands. This causes all the weight to be carried by the opposing leg. Alternating from lifting the left to right legs results in weight transfers.

Weight Transfers can take several forms and can go from easy to more difficult. **Remember: always respect the pet's capabilities and never do an exercise past fatigue.**

Weight transfer exercises are easy to do with cats. A useful tool for this is a small board or a firm cushion. Just put the kitty's hind legs on the board and gently shift their weight from side to side. This works out the front legs nicely.

CONE BENDING

Cone bending is a great way to get the spine to move. Start with 3-4 cones (pop bottles also work fine), each placed the length of the dog's body apart. Have the dog do "S" bends around the cones, thus bending their spine from side to side. When they get really good at it, the cones can be moved closer together.

This rehabilitation guide has been developed in collaboration with Dr. Jennifer Stelfox DVM, Certified Canine Rehabilitation Therapist

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