



## – An Introduction to Physiotherapy for Owners

- Physiotherapy is an excellent way to get the best possible recovery from TPLO surgery.
- The combination of previous pain and instability often mean that the injured leg has lost a lot of muscular strength and tone; once the leg is stable, and recovered from surgery, repairing and replacing this muscle loss contributes greatly to normal leg use.
- Your vet will be able to advise on specific timings for your pet's recovery, but these exercises can all be useful to help aid recovery of normal limb movement and muscle redevelopment.

## Rehabilitation exercises you can try at home:

- **Passive range of motion exercises:**

Short repeated sessions, e.g. one minute, repeated four to six times daily. This can start on the third day after surgery.

Gently massage your dog's leg before carrying out the passive range of motion exercises. The massage has a calming effect on your dog and helps them to relax before carrying out rehabilitation exercises.

Each joint should be gently moved through its full pain-free range of motion. Bend and straighten the hock (ankle), stifle (knee) and hip joints. Do not force the limb if your dog resists strongly.

Range of motion exercises are important in maintaining or improving flexibility after injury or surgery and reducing pain.

- **Weight-shifting exercises:**

Aim to have all four limbs placed correctly on the ground while carrying out this exercise. One minute four times daily. Start 7-10 days after surgery.

Place your dog in a square stand, with all four limbs placed correctly under the body and paws facing 12 o'clock. Gently rock your dog's trunk from side to side, with your hands

placed alongside the top of the pelvis/rump. The aim is to move the trunk as little as possible whilst shifting the weight from one side to the other.

This exercise improves co-ordination, muscle strength and endurance.

- **Head turns:**

Standing in front of your dog, use a treat to encourage them to move their head from one side, back to centre, to the other side and repeat.

One minute four times daily. Start 7-10 days after surgery

This exercise helps improve balance and strengthens your dog's core muscles.

Hydrotherapy, laser therapy, and more advanced physiotherapy exercises are also all potentially beneficial to patients. We would recommend discussing these with your vet and ensuring they are carried out under direction of licensed personnel who have been trained in canine rehabilitation.

## **Rehabilitation walking:**

- **Controlled lead walking:**

Starting during weeks 5 & 6 after surgery.

Take your dog for a ten minute walk, twice a day. Stick to even and level ground. Keep your dog on a short lead and walk slowly to encourage good use of all four legs. This assists with gait re-training and helps to improve muscle function through enhanced endurance and strength.

If you feel your dog is uncomfortable or you are unable to carry out the exercises at home, discontinue with the exercises and contact your practice for some advice.