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PHYSICAL THERAPY

Pets who suffer from spinal injuries may be unable to stand or ambulate on their own. While in their recovery stage, there are basic exercises we can do with them at home to help gain back strength and coordination, as well as keeping their joints freely moving.

Passive Range of Motion (PROM) is a commonly used exercise that involves gentle movements of joints through their “normal” flexion and extension. Many refer to this exercise as “bicycling.” Depending on your pet’s injury, they may need these exercises done in all four limbs or just the hindlimbs (if they are still ambulating the front limbs well on their own).

How to perform PROM:

- PROM is easiest to do while your pet is calm, relaxed, and laying in a lateral position (on their side). However, it can be done while your pet is standing and supported if it is more comfortable for them.
- Sometimes it may be easiest to have two people to help stabilize your pet
- For Front Limbs- Place one hand at the top of their shoulder and your other hand on their paw, bend their leg by gently pushing up on the backside of their foot, moving the entire limb through its natural flexion and extension motion.
- For Hind Limbs- Place one hand at the top of their pelvis and your other hand on their foot; Flex all joints into the normal range of motions moving their leg in a “bicycle” action. This can be done forwards and backward.
- This should be done for 5-10 repetitions on each affected limb, 4-6 times per day

**** Shorter, more frequent reps are much more helpful than longer, infrequent reps****

Cryotherapy (Cold Therapy)

- It can be helpful with pain management and aid in the reduction of edema for up to 72 hours after initial injury or surgery
- Can use gel packs, frozen vegetables, or a frozen wet washcloth
- Apply a cold compress for about 10 minutes - always making sure to have a cloth or towel in between pets’ skin and the cold pack

Heat Therapy

- Can be used after the initial 72 hours, for 5-7 days
- Can use gel packs that are able to be heated, rice bags, or warm wet washcloths that are squeezed out to remove excess water
- Apply a warm compress for about 10 minutes; always make sure there is a towel between pets’ skin and the warm pack