



Hydrotherapy Following Spinal Surgery Factsheet

Our Therapy and Fitness Centre team explain how Hydrotherapy can be used to aid recovery after spinal surgery.

What are the benefits of hydrotherapy after spinal surgery?

Walking in the underwater treadmill allows us to exercise animals in a controlled environment following surgery. The buoyancy of the water helps to reduce weight and pressure from the joints, which makes movement easier for weaker patients. Following spinal surgery, it is likely the animal will have limb weakness and may be unable to walk independently. Because the water provides support it makes it easier for the patient to stand and walk with lighter support, this helps them to regain strength and stability.

Why choose an underwater treadmill?

Following spinal surgery, it is important for the animal not to perform any vigorous movements, the underwater treadmill provides a controlled environment where we are able to keep the patient straight and provide additional support if needed.

- Allows the water level to be controlled
- Allows the speed of the belt to be controlled
- Able to keep the patient straight
- Increases proprioception
- Encourages equal weight bearing

The underwater treadmill allows us to control the speed of the belt which is important when trying to re-educate their gait. Also, we are able to help the patient place their limbs on the belt.

What does proprioception mean?

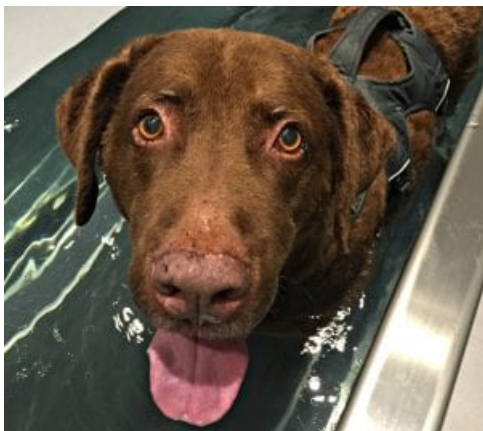
Proprioception refers to the perception and awareness of the position and movement of the limb.

Often following spinal surgery animals will have reduced proprioception which means they may not be able to control their limb movement or foot placement.



Other techniques we use in the water

- **Facilitation** – Placement of the limbs, increases proprioception
- **Thoracic limb plate** – isolates forelimbs so only hind limbs are working, increases hind limb strength and hip extension
- **Tarsal band** – placed just above hock, to increase proprioception of the hind limb
- **Backwards walking** – to activate hind limb muscles and strengthen, also increases proprioception
- **Resistance band** – used to reduce external rotation of the limbs or to work hind limbs harder
- **Surfing** – can be used with small breeds that are recovering well, engages core muscles which help to strengthen core and stabilise spine.



At Davies Therapy and Fitness Centre, our therapy team will assess your dog, provide helpful exercise guidance and utilise a variety of treatment techniques to help your pet achieve their goals.

To find out more, visit: vetspecialiststherapy.co.uk

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