

ANIMAL Physiotherapy Services

Physiotherapy for Cruciate Injuries Information Sheet

For decades, Physiotherapy has been routinely used in humans with cruciate ligament injuries; with the advent of formal training in Animal Physiotherapy, we are now able to offer the same science-based rehabilitation to our pets that we would expect for other members of our family.


It takes 8 years to qualify as an Animal Physiotherapist, and our team is the most qualified and experienced in Australia in working with dogs who have injured their cruciates. If you're anything like we are with our own pets, you'll have lots of questions about your pet's care, so please read the following and feel welcome to contact us should you have any further questions. (Email Helen Nicholson on info@k9physio.com or phone (02) 4739 4557)

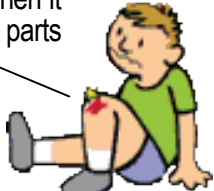
What happens at Physio?

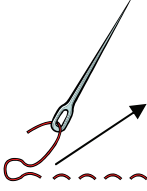
After discussing the case with the Vet, the Physiotherapist performs a thorough assessment and formulates an individualized Physiotherapy program. You are given a written "homework" program which you are taught to do competently prior to leaving the appointment and are encouraged to perform most days of the week at home. We have to do this because we can't rely on dogs to remember to do their exercises, but we make sure as many of them are as fun as possible! The homework is then upgraded at regular review appointments to ensure your pet is progressing optimally and that we get on top of any complications or compensations as quickly as possible.


What does Physiotherapy for cruciate injuries involve?


Physiotherapy helps with the following important rehabilitation issues following a cruciate ligament injury:


 The body swells in response to injury or surgery and even small amounts of swelling in and around the knee inhibit or "switch off" the surrounding muscles, leaving the knee less protected from further injury. Swelling must be managed as soon after cruciate surgery as possible.

 Likewise, pain can influence your muscle control – it's hard to move properly when it hurts! Pre- and post-operative pain need to be managed, as does pain in other parts of the body, which may have been overworked since the cruciate was injured.

 Scar tissue needs to be both strong and supple to allow the underlying muscles to function correctly. Scar management after cruciate surgery is begun at suture removal.

 Although we aren't aiming to become Olympic gymnasts, your pet still needs to maintain flexibility after cruciate surgery to ensure other regions of the body don't "go out in sympathy"!

 It is important that balance is regained between the length and strength of the muscles in the operated leg and also throughout the body to ensure optimal comfort and function both now and as your pet grows older.

 Where chronic or severe muscle spasm or pain are a problem, for example when a trigger point develops after cruciate surgery, the Physiotherapist has training in the safe application of a number of electrotherapy machines to help gently relieve the symptoms.

But most importantly, the latest human research shows that patients continue to have deficits in position sense, balance and muscular control for at least 6 to 12 months after cruciate surgery, and that these deficits actually occur in both legs, not just the injured side. This leaves the patient at increased risk of injuring the other leg, which might explain why so many dogs go on to rupture the other cruciate, too. The human researchers therefore recommend that even when patients appear to be doing well after cruciate surgery, that they are rehabilitated properly through the correct progression of exercises to ensure optimum long-term surgical success and to minimise the risk of further surgery.