

## THERAPEUTIC EXERCISES

**What is it?** Therapeutic exercises are exercises you teach your dog to do, or that he knows already, that will help strengthen specific muscles, tendons or ligaments. Walking, running and swimming are therapeutic exercises but so, too, are simple maneuvers such as standing up or stretching to grasp a treat or toy.

Just as people often do particular exercises for rehabilitation, we have ways to help dogs do this as well. For example, to strengthen a weak back leg we may have the dog sit while leaning up against a wall, so the wall can support his good or bad side (depending on the desired result), and then have him stand, and sit, and stand again, for however many repetitions are appropriate. A dog who is not using a back leg well may be asked to take steps while you support his upper body - doggy dancing. A dog who needs shoulder work may be asked to run through a fabric tunnel, where he has to crouch down on his front legs.

Exercise routines vary greatly with the pet and the situation. The program for an overweight, out-of-condition arthritis patient will be very different from that of an athletic dog recovering from an injury. For a spinal patient, simply standing upright may be hard work. Many spinal patients are treated several times daily and stay in the hospital at first before going home with their owners, who can then work with them at home or bring them back for regular treatment and reevaluation.

For owners with their own disabilities or who are unable to do the recommended exercises with their pets we can sometimes arrange for someone to come to your house to assist in the exercise program. Dogs are often more motivated to succeed if their owner is present, however.

**How in the world do I get my dog to do this?** The same way you would teach any other command - show him what to do and reward with treats and praise. Dogs usually love the extra attention they get for doing these crazy antics. We will work with you to show you how to go about any exercise we recommend.

**Types of exercises:**

Sit to stand

Doggy dancing

Wheel barrowing

Walking or trotting over Cavaletti poles

Walking in circles or zig-zags

Pole weaving

Tug games

Playing ball

Uphill and downhill walking, straight or at an angle

Stair climbing