

**1.) What is Animal Rehabilitation (AR)?**

- a. AR is treatment on animals for orthopaedic, geriatric, athletic, and neurologic injuries and conditions. Wellness and prevention of injury are included as may be wound care.

**2.) What is the Animal Rehabilitation Special Interest Group (ARSIG), and what does it do?**

- a. The ARSIG is a special interest group of the Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy, of the American Physical Therapy Association. The purpose of the ARSIG is to provide a platform for physical therapists and physical therapist assistants to educate, promote, and advance the practice of animal rehabilitation and wellness in all state jurisdictions.

**3.) Who can join the ARSIG?**

- a. Membership is open to all PTs, PTAs, and students who are members of the APTA and the Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy. There is no additional fee associated with joining the ARSIG.

**4.) How do I join the ARSIG if I am a member of the APTA/AOPT?**

- a. Visit the ARSIG's website to sign up. <https://www.orthopt.org/content/special-interest-groups/animal-rehabilitation>

**5.) What requirements are necessary to be able to provide rehabilitation to animals?**

- a. Laws and requirements regarding practicing animal physical therapy and rehabilitation vary from state to state. It is necessary that you check with your state's Physical Therapy and Veterinary Practice Acts to determine if animal physical therapy is legal in your state and what requirements may be needed in addition to your PT license if so.
- b. The American Veterinary Medical Association guidelines state that veterinary physical therapy should be performed by a licensed veterinarian, a veterinary technician, or a licensed physical therapist educated in anatomy and physiology. The AMVA also recommends that all therapy should be under the supervision of or referral by a licensed veterinarian.

**6.) Can Physical Therapists treat animals in my state?**

- a. You will need to access your state's Physical Therapy and Veterinary Practice Acts in order to determine this. Currently, the only states that specifically address and allow physical therapists to practice on animals are: CO, NE, and NH. In these states, specific criteria are outlined in the Physical Therapy and Veterinary Practice Acts of the state. In these states, PT's can practice with animals and use their PT credentials.
- b. In other states, animal rehabilitation provided by PT's is in the scope of practice of veterinarians. These states are FL, GA, IL, ME, and MI. Practice by PT's regarding supervision, requirement to practice in the veterinarian's practice location or

elsewhere, is specified in the Veterinary Practice Act. These specifics are clearer for the Veterinary Practice Act in some states than in others.

- c. In some states, the Veterinary Practice Act states that PTs can practice under the area of complementary, alternative, or integrative therapy. These states are MS, OK, TN, and VA.
- d. In most states the practice acts are not definitive. Interpretation of the Practice Acts is not always clear, and it is your responsibility to ensure you are not practicing outside of your scope in your state. Doing so could result in a Cease and Desist mandate from the veterinary profession and potential jeopardy to your PT license.

e. **Physical Therapy Practice Acts by State**

<http://www.apta.org/Licensure/StatePracticeActs/>

**Veterinary Practice Acts**

<https://rehabvets.org/state-practice-acts.lasso/> and choose State Practice Acts - Professionals or go to your search engine of choice and enter the state of interest and “veterinary practice act”.

**7.) What is the stance of the APTA regarding physical therapists providing animal rehabilitation?**

- a. Veterinarians: Collaborative Relationships (HOD P06-03-23-20)  
PRACTICE OF PHYSICAL THERAPISTS IN ANIMAL REHABILITATION BOD P03-05-17-44  
[Position]

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) acknowledges the collaborative relationships of physical therapists and veterinarians and the evolution of specialized practice by physical therapists in animal rehabilitation. Consistent with the Mission Statement Fulfillment adopted by the House of Delegates to enable physical therapists to improve their knowledge and skills in the interest of furthering the profession where allowable by law and regulation, the practice of animal rehabilitation by physical therapists is permissible.

**8.) If allowed, how do Physical Therapists offer services to animals?**

- a. PT is not a substitute for veterinary medicine. As with humans, rehabilitation is part of a holistic approach to managing pathology and addressing functional limitations. It is essential that you work with the owner and the veterinarian as well as possibly other individuals such as trainers or farriers to ensure a team approach to examination and intervention.

**9.) What animals are typically treated by Physical Therapists?**

- a. The most common species is canine, however, equine and feline are often referred for services, as well. It is not unheard of for animals such as donkeys, cows, goats, etc. to be referred for rehabilitation.

**10.)What conditions are typically seen in animals referred for Animal Rehabilitation?**

a. Examples follow, however please be aware the list is not all inclusive regarding treatment of dogs, horses, or other animals.

- **Movement dysfunction from a variety of causes**
  - Gait abnormalities
  - Functional mobility problems – stairs, sitting, getting into a car, (canine);
  - sports-specific issues, changes in ability (jumping, racing, dressage, etc.) (equine)
  - Balance problems
  - Endurance limitation
  
- **Orthopaedic**
  - Joint conditions
  - Post-surgical treatments/protocols
  - Arthritis
  - Muscle strains/tears
  - Sprains – ligaments, tendons
  - Fractures
  
- **Geriatric**
  - Arthritis
  - Muscle wasting
  
- **Neurological**
  - Disc herniations
  - Paralysis/paresis
  - Degenerative myelopathy
  - Equine Protozoal Myelopathy/West Nile Disease
  
- **Sports injuries**
  - Agility
  - Competition
  - Breed/species specific, e.g. racing (greyhounds, horses)
  
- **Job specific**
  - Part of a police team – such as German shepherds, mounted police
  - Herding - border collies
  - Search and rescue: dogs and horses
  
- **Wellness/prevention – examples**
  - Weight management
  - Conditioning
  - Saddle fit/assessment

**11.) Where is Animal Rehabilitation typically provided?**

- a. Veterinary hospitals or clinics with a rehabilitation practice
- b. Patient/client's homes/barns, with varying levels of supervision/medical clearance from a veterinarian.
  - i. Supervision can range from onsite and directly supervised to offsite with permission of the veterinarian depending on each state's PT and Vet Practice Acts.
- c. Private clinics or settings

**12.) If my veterinary clinic advertises that it provides "Physical Therapy" does this mean it has a Physical Therapist on staff?**

- a. Not necessarily. While not law, the APTA opposes use of "physical therapy" or "physiotherapy" in veterinary practice unless services are performed by a physical therapist, or under the direction and supervision of, a physical therapist acting in accordance with American Physical Therapy Association positions, standards, guidelines, policies, and procedures, and jurisdictional law.
- b. Per the APTA: Some jurisdictions expressly limit the use of terms such as physical therapy, physiotherapy, physical therapist, and physiotherapist to those individuals who are licensed pursuant to the jurisdiction's physical therapy practice act. Conversely, other jurisdictions do not expressly protect the use of all of these terms, but rather they imply that the use of such terms is limited to use by a licensed physical therapist.

**13.) Are there continuing education or certification programs for those PTs who wish to provide Animal Rehabilitation?**

- a. At this time there are three certification programs that provide advanced education to Physical Therapists interested in treating animals.
  - i. The University of Tennessee/Northeast Seminars: Canine and Equine Programs  
<https://www.utvetce.com/canine-rehab-ccrp>  
<https://www.utvetce.com/equine-rehab-cerp>
  - ii. Canine Rehabilitation Institute: Canine Program  
<https://www.caninerehabinstitute.com/>
  - iii. Animal Rehabilitation Institute: Equine Program  
<https://animalrehabinstitute.com/>

**14.) Is there malpractice insurance available for Physical Therapists who are treating animals?**

- a. HPSO MAY provide coverage for PTs in states that have language in their practice acts that specifically address animal rehab. e.g.. CO, NE, NH.
- b. Physical Therapists working in veterinary clinics MAY be covered under their employer's insurance.

- c. Do not assume you are covered by personal liability insurance or business insurance. It is your responsibility to determine if you are covered for treatment of animals which typically depends on the practice acts of your state.