



PHYSIOTHERAPY MANAGEMENT OF: FCE (Fibrocartilaginous embolism)

FCE is the most common vascular spinal cord condition in dogs. FCE generally occurs in medium to large breeds but also found in miniature schnauzer (and rarely cats) and often 3-6 years old. A history of trauma or vigorous exercise is relatively common with a sudden onset of acute, non-progressive paresis or paralysis with peak severity within the first 24 hours. It may be painful initially but this usually settles quickly.

The infarction of the spinal cord results from occlusion of either spinal arteries or veins with fibrocartilage. There is still much to learn about origin of this fibrocartilage, but it is believed to arise from degenerating intervertebral disc material. It can affect different parts of the spine but usually in the lower neck or lower back and can affect one or both sides with paralysis.

Prognosis will depend on the degree of the spinal cord damage. It is important to have an assessment early following veterinary assessment to maximise the recovery. This can begin as an inpatient with an extensive home program supplied at discharge. Physiotherapy can be very beneficial in assisting in recovery and maximising quality of life and the first 2 weeks is very important.

In human literature there is vast evidence to support the use of Physiotherapy to maximise healing and recovery with back pain and spinal cord injuries. Pain, swelling and inflammation results in inhibition of the stability muscles (deep muscles supporting the joints or spine - especially the transversus abdominus, pelvic floor and deep back multifidus muscles). After FCE, due to paralysis, there is often rapid muscle wasting. This will need specific treatment to recovery adequately.

PHYSIOTHERAPY BENEFITS:

- **Reduce pain/muscle spasm**
- **Facilitate healing**
- **Restore normal passive range of movement**
- **Muscle re-education – normalise muscle tone and balance**
- **Assist functional return to activities**
- **Prevent or minimise complications**
- **Improve proprioception (joint position sense)**
- **Improve core stability**
- **Increase strength in a controlled manner**

- **Gait re-education**
- **Manage and improve quality of life when poor prognosis of recovery of paralysis e.g. provision of wheel chair/aides where appropriate**
- **Education to manage at home and maximise recovery**

Physiotherapy uses a vast combination of techniques to aid recovery. This may include gentle manual therapy/mobilisation, massage, stretches, acupuncture, balance and stability exercises, gait re-education, underwater treadmill training, hydrotherapy, controlled strengthening and proprioceptive retraining or bracing/taping. An extensive home program will be given to help maximise your dog's recovery and this must be performed **PAINFREE**. Every dog is unique and should be treated as such when designing a program – **there is no formula!**

WHEN?

Treatment should begin as soon as possible after an injury/surgery, preferably in early stages to reduce pain, aid healing, and maximise recovery. Day 1 post FCE Physiotherapy can be offered as an inpatient.

Physiotherapy is not just about exercise – we are experts at acute management of injuries also. Therefore, it is vital to maximise the speed of your dog's recovery to make sure he/she safely gets back to appropriate exercises and therefore limit any secondary complications.

CONSULTATION

At Holistic Animal Physiotherapy we provide a thorough assessment (1-1.5 hr), including hands-on/manual assessment and treatment from nose to tail, acupuncture, advice and provision of home program (including provision of appropriate stability exercises). We can also provide advice to help manage your animal at home with confinement, (as this can be stressful for the human and dog) and tailor your program to your needs. We are available for advice for ongoing management at any stage. Following consultations are 30 mins-45 mins or packages of underwater treadmill and laser may be included.

LOOKING FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Please visit www.holisticanimalphysio.com.au / Facebook (holistic animal physiotherapy)/Instagram (brookeanimalphysio). Call Brooke (0408 022 660) to make an appointment or ask any questions you may have.

Kind regards

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