Rehabilitation Services
for small animal patients

The University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center is one of the nation’s largest, most comprehensive veterinary health centers. The Medical Center has more than 50 board-certified veterinary specialists on staff and sees more than 35,000 appointments per year. The faculty and staff listed below work in Rehabilitation Services.

Elizabeth LaFond, DVM, DACVS, CCRP
Director, Small Animal Rehabilitation Services
Dr. Elizabeth LaFond is associate clinical professor of small animal surgery in the College of Veterinary Medicine and associate medical director of core services at the Veterinary Medical Center. A Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, she has special interest in minimally invasive soft-tissue surgery, rehabilitation medicine, orthotics, and prosthetics. She is a certified canine rehabilitation practitioner.

Kimberly Barrett, BS, CVT, CCRP
Kimberly Barrett is a certified veterinary technician and certified canine rehabilitation practitioner. She has worked at the Veterinary Medical Center since 2008 and is also the program coordinator for Basic Animal Rescue Training.

Siri Rea, CVT, VTS (anesthesia)
Siri Rea is a certified veterinary technician pursuing her canine rehabilitation certification. She has worked at the Veterinary Medical Center in the anesthesia service since 2000 and in the rehabilitation service since 2009. She has a specialty certification in veterinary anesthesia.

Cases that respond well to physical rehabilitation include

Joint and soft-tissue injuries
- Ligament sprains
- Tendonitis
- Muscle strains

Post-operative orthopedic injuries
- Cruciate ligament ruptures
- Patella luxations
- Fracture fixations
- Hip replacement or salvage procedures
- Elbow replacement

Neurological conditions
- Degenerative disk disease
- Spinal stenosis
- Fibrocartilaginous emboli
- Postoperative neck and back surgeries

Congenital and degenerative disorders
- Hip dysplasia
- Elbow dysplasia
- Osteoarthritis
- Spondylosis
- Degenerative myelopathy

What else you can expect
- Qualified professional guidance to support you and your pet during the recovery process
- Improved outcome and recovery from injury, illness, or surgery
- Conditioning and maintenance for senior pets to increase strength and stamina and improve balance, coordination, and mobility to reduce stumbles and falls and boost confidence
- Individualized strength and conditioning programs for working dogs and athletic competitors
- Conservative management to support and facilitate recovery while awaiting surgery or when surgery may not be an option
- Cardiovascular exercise programs tailored for weight loss or weight management
- Estimates for recommended therapy programs will be provided after initial examination and evaluation.

Appointments
For appointments or more information, call 612-626-VETS (8387).
Appointments are generally scheduled Mondays through Fridays. Estimates for recommended therapy programs will be provided after initial examination and evaluation.

The brightest in the field

KIMBERLY PERFORMS THERAPEUTIC ULTRASOUND ON A PATIENT. THIS THERAPY HELPS TO INCREASE CIRCULATION IN SUPPORTING TISSUES TO ALLOW BETTER STRETCHING AND JOINT RANGE OF MOTION.

BERT, A DOG UNDERGOING REHABILITATION FOR WOBBLERS DISEASE AND SPINAL SURGERY, ENJOYS PLAYING ON THE LAWN IN HIS VEST HARNESS.

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Keeping Minnesota's animals healthy

Therapies for rehabilitation and recovery

The goal of Rehabilitation Services is to help pets recovering from surgical procedures or suffering from pain, injury, disease, or movement abnormalities to return to as normal function and activity as possible. We offer conditioning programs that can help prevent injury or reduce or eliminate the need for medical or surgical treatment. Through our expertise in movement and function, we strive to expedite our patients’ treatment and recovery. At the Veterinary Medical Center, we are able to offer diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation all in one location.

Benefits of treatment include

- Pain relief and improved comfort
- Decreased swelling and inflammation
- Acceleration of normal healing
- Improved joint range of motion
- Prevention of muscle loss
- Increased strength
- Retraining use of limbs
- Earlier return to function
- Improved cardiovascular fitness
- Weight loss
- Positive psychological effects
- Reduced chance of further injury

The rehabilitation process begins with a thorough evaluation of the patient, including medical and surgical history, current medications, gait analysis, physical examination, review of home environment, and discussion of owner expectations and rehabilitation goals. This allows the owner and certified canine rehabilitation practitioner to understand what is going on with the pet and plan the best rehabilitation program for the patient.

Programs are designed to improve weight-bearing, balance, coordination, strength, and endurance to regain and maintain the health of muscles, bones, and joints. Owners are encouraged to take an active role in the pet’s recovery by following a prescribed therapy program at home.

Individual treatment plans may include

- Physical agents
  - Heat
  - Cold
  - Electrical stimulation
  - Therapeutic ultrasound
  - Therapeutic laser

- Manual therapy
  - Massage
  - Passive joint range of motion
  - Stretching
  - Joint mobilization

- Aquatic therapy
  - Underwater treadmill
  - Swimming

- Therapeutic exercise
  - Land treadmill
  - Physioball® exercises
  - Balance board
  - Weight-shifting activities
  - Movement through cones or tunnels
  - Negotiating obstacles and challenging terrain

- Functional activities
  - Sit/stands
  - Stair climbing
  - Job tasks
  - Competitive activities

- Professional fitting and measurements for adaptive devices such as carts and splints

- Recommendations for modifications to the home environment

Patients in our rehabilitation programs range from family pets with degenerative diseases or recovering from injuries and surgeries; to seniors with chronic, debilitating conditions; to national agility, obedience, and conformation competitors and field trial, hunting, and service dogs.