TECH TIPS!! Feline Rehab: Purrrrrfect Strategies for Making Strides and Maximizing Mobility

1. Keep sessions short. Multiple short sessions keep cats interested and reduce stress. Let the cat take the lead on what activities they are able to tolerate. Less is best!

2. Multimodal approach to feline mobility. Treat pain, manage body condition, reduce impact of exercise and address arthritis. Remember 100% of cats over the age of 10 have some degree of osteoarthritis!
3. Feline specific treatment bed or blankets treated with Feliway pheromones and safe “exit” or resting placed during therapy.

4. A safe environment for our feline patients. Think like a cat and remove or block access to unsafe hiding spots or escape routes.
5. Use harnesses that do not restrict movement and long lightweight leashes to help guide the patient during therapy.

6. Creative use of exercise equipment. Make a therapy “course” for the cat to choose what piece of equipment they want to walk over/around/under but keeping them contained in one area.
7. Flotation devices or flutter boards to assist with acclimation to a therapy pool or underwater treadmill.

8. Land Treadmill as an alternative to underwater treadmill.

10. Appropriately sized equipment for feline patients. Going big might mean going home!
About the Author

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Jenn Panko owns and manages The SPAW, a Canine Rehabilitation, Sports Medicine, and Fitness Centre in Aldergrove, British Columbia Canada in partnership with The Aldergrove Animal Hospital. She is a Registered Veterinary Technologist (Seneca College, Ontario 2005) where she was the recipient of The Veterinary Technology Recognition and Appreciation Award for dedication to and excellence in animal care. She completed The University of Tennessee’s Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner Program in 2006. In 2012 she completed the University of Tennessee’s Certified Osteoarthritis Case Management Program and was the recipient of The Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians Award of Merit for enhancing the image of the veterinary technology profession and a long standing history of community service for her volunteer work teaching therapeutic horseback riding lessons to children and adults with diverse physical and intellectual abilities. In 2014 she completed the University of Tennessee’s Companion Animal Pain Management Certificate Program. Her clinical experience includes a variety of work in private, referral, and academic companion animal practice, mobile, racetrack, and surgical equine practice, and wildlife rehabilitation. Jenn has a wide variety of experience in orthopedic, neurologic, weight loss, and conditioning rehabilitation. She developed her toolbox of rehabilitation skills at The Mississauga-Oakville Veterinary Emergency Hospital and Referral Group, coordinating CARE, The Companion Animal Rehabilitation Experts, Rehabilitation Service. She also managed The Neurology and MRI Service. Prior to her recent relocation to British Columbia she was part of the team at The Hill’s Pet Nutrition Primary Healthcare Centre, as a primary healthcare technician and coordinator of The Fitness and Rehabilitation Service at The Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph. She is pleased to provide rehabilitation lectures and workshops at conferences and veterinary meetings and teach large animal laboratory sessions at her local veterinary technician college.