



Position statement for Veterinary Technician Specialists (VTS) working with Non-Veterinarians

The Academy of Physical Rehabilitation Veterinary Technicians (APRVT) recognizes that the field of animal physical rehabilitation is a novel field attracting individuals who are not veterinarians or credentialed veterinary technicians, but who are trained in human therapies including physical therapy, orthosis/prostheses, chiropractic, massage therapy and athletic fitness. In addition, canine and equine trainers who are not veterinarians or credentialed veterinary technicians, and who are not trained in human physical disciplines are providing fitness training for personalized fitness and sports.

The APRVT encourages collaboration between individuals interested in advancing knowledge in the field of animal physical rehabilitation, through research, and through application of treatment techniques used in other species. The aforementioned treatment techniques should be applied with the knowledge that the effectiveness of a treatment in one species does not imply effectiveness in another.

Current licensing requirements allowing non-veterinarians to treat animals vary across the United States and these regulations will continue to change. The APRVT recognizes that education in the non-veterinary field may be adequate to treat veterinary patients using a specific technique, and in some instances that technique may be the best way to treat the pathology or dysfunction. However, establishing a specific diagnosis, evaluation and treatment of the patient, and re-evaluation of the diagnosis(-es) **MUST be performed by a licensed veterinarian** who has established a valid client-patient-relationship.

Veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians undergo extensive animal training both before and during their formal education. This means that they possess anticipatory skills and the ability to interpret and respond to animal behavior (e.g. fear, pain and aggression) during diagnosis, and during therapy. They also can apply concepts of animal learning (associative or non-associative) and behavior modification (e.g. desensitization, positive reinforcement, classical conditioning, etc.) facilitating the application of physical rehabilitation therapies. They utilize low stress handling, minimal restraint and behavior modification for patients in order to prevent anxiety and stress. In the case of an elevation of stressful behavior on the part of the patient, veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians are trained to differentiate general stress from pain. Credentialed veterinary technicians are trained to understand pharmaceutical drugs or equipment for the control and safety of patients. The veterinarian corrects the therapeutic approach as needed in the interest of animal welfare. Veterinarians and credentialed veterinary technicians also can properly instruct owners or caregivers to safely handle patients while completing therapeutic exercises.

Veterinarians and non-veterinarians licensed to practice in the field of animal physical rehabilitation have varying degrees of education, skill level and experience in the field. It is the responsibility of the Veterinarian with additional training and knowledge in physical rehabilitation or the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation (ACVSMR) diplomate to ensure that a correct diagnosis has been made for the patients under his or her care, and the responsibility lies on that veterinarian or diplomate to adequately supervise any individual involved in the treatment of said patient. Adequate supervision should include thorough knowledge of the individual's skill set and experience and direct contact with the individual. It is the responsibility of each veterinarian or ACVSMR diplomate to ensure best practices in the care of their patients, and that responsibility includes choosing, and where necessary supervising, other individuals' care of that patient.

Date Approved by the Executive board of directors: 3/23/18.