

Acton pet rehab a 'swimming' success

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Ty is a three-year-old Bulldog with a shoulder injury, who has been using the underwater treadmill at the Blue Springs Animal Rehabilitation clinic.

As he gingerly nibbles treats being fed to him over the glass, the dog wades slowly through the water on the treadmill.

"He has an injury of a tendon in his shoulder," said Debbie Hrynkiw, Ty's owner. She says that the treadmill is gentler than regular walking, because of the water.

"There's a lot of benefits of the treadmill," said Kristy DesRoche, an associate veterinarian at Black Creek Animal Hospital in Acton, who has just opened the Blue Springs Animal Rehab adjacent to the vet clinic.

"The water provides buoyancy, so that they don't have the same concussive impact on the joint tissue and joints," she said, explaining that the treadmill still encourages the animal to use a full range of motion in their strides. "They're maintaining



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

Ty is a three-year-old Bulldog with a shoulder injury who is using the underwater treadmill for rehab treatment.

the mobility of that joint, without damaging it."

She says that the pressure of the water against the animal's injury can reduce swelling and pain.

"They enjoy it," she said, looking down at Ty as he shakes the water from himself, post swim.

Over the years working as a vet, she says she has seen an in-

creasing need for rehab services for pets.

From those suffering ailments ranging from strain injuries to arthritis, she knew that pets could benefit from the crisper form of physiotherapy.

She and her colleague travelled to the University of Tennessee to receive certification in canine rehabilitation. Currently, these courses are only available

in the U.S., through the University of Tennessee and the University of Florida.

DesRoche treats clients with a referral from a veterinarian, and can also provide laser therapy, and swimming in the endless pool at the treatment centre for those with greater mobility.

Laser therapy can be used speed healing after an operation, reducing pain and inflammation. The endless pool is a system where dogs wearing a life-jacket can swim against the current.

"Rehab for pets is something that is on the rise," said DesRoche, explaining that while she is the first to offer the service in the Halton Hills-Milton area, there are more rehab centres popping up around the Greater Toronto Area.

"It's very much established in the States," she said.

Recreational swimming is also available for owners who want to help keep their dogs active and need a safe clean place to swim.

"We know that there's a need for it, because we see it in our own patients," said DesRoche. "It's nice to finally offer it."



By Cory Soal
R.H.A.D.

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