



How to Keep Your Pet Happy and Healthy at Home... Between Massage Therapy Sessions!



PROVIDE SOME CARPETING AND SOFTER SURFACES

Hardwood and tile floors can be hard on your pet's paws. Carpeting provides a softer surface for footfalls and shock absorption that makes it much less punishing on the joints, and the rough texture helps prevent slips and falls.

Pets will often alter their gait and overcompensate on slippery surfaces to avoid falling, using the wrong muscles to move unnaturally, causing strains. By providing your pet with surfaces that are non-slip and kinder to their feet, you help maintain their joint health and avoid future difficulties later in their lives.

If your pet is already a senior, protecting their joints is all the more important, as they are even more susceptible to injury.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

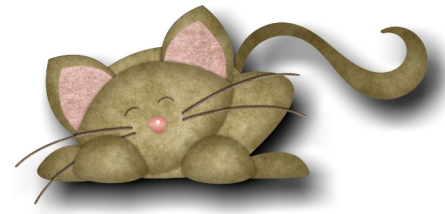
Temperature - If your room temperature is too cold, it can make your hard surface floors colder. If your pet lays on this cold flooring, their muscles could become stiff. Circulation in the extremities is already poorer than in the rest of the body, so a cold floor will make paws uncomfortable (especially if your pet suffers from arthritis).

Humidity - If humidity is too high, perspiration does not evaporate so easily, making it difficult to cool down. Those at higher risk include young puppies and kittens, geriatric dogs and cats, pets that are ill, and pets that are brachycephalic (like pugs and bulldogs). Too much humidity can also aggravate arthritis.

Smoking - Remember, second-hand smoke (cigarettes, etc.) adversely affects your pets too.



SPACIAL CONSIDERATIONS



Large Dogs - Clutter should be kept to a minimum, particularly knick-knacks at the same level as the dog that are easily knocked over, and furniture the dog could bump into repetitiously. Your large dog could also injure themselves by nicking themselves on corners of furniture where they have little space to squeeze through and on shards if they tip over items on lower tabletops. Your home should have plenty of space for the dog to stretch out and be mobile. They also need to feel comfortable standing still, with enough space to turn around without hunching.

Small Dogs and Cats (particularly older felines) - Consider where they may wish to jump up or down from (i.e. the couch or the bed) and provide them with pet stairs placed on a non-slip surface, to help them up and down without sustaining shock absorption related injuries to their joints. You also need to be "aware" of your little dog or cat, as they will doubtlessly end up under foot from time to time.



IF YOU HAVE STAIRS

If you have a lot of stairs, this can be hard on your pet's joints. I'm talking staircases, not little pet stairs that help keep your small pet from jumping all the way up on the couch or bed (or back down to the floor from the couch or the bed), although if even a few steps are a problem for your senior pet, a ramp would solve this issue, too.

Stairs also increase risk of fall, falling harder and farther than on even ground. The resulting injuries could be much more severe, including muscle strains, bruises, fractures, head injuries and even death.

If it's possible to keep your pet from using a particularly tall staircase, or any staircases at all (even if it's just during the day when you're away at work), that's one way to help. Otherwise, make sure the steps are not something they can easily slip on by adding carpeting or anything non-slip.

Other tips: carry your pet instead of letting them tackle the stairs themselves; install ramps; make sure visibility is optimal with appropriate lighting, so your pet doesn't misjudge.



MASSAGE THERAPY HOME CARE

Effleurage and Raking are relatively easy relaxing strokes you can do between massage appointments, as is the stimulating stroke called Tapotement. Make sure to discuss with your Vet or pet massage therapist first, in case there are contraindications. (See kurik9massage.com for more information.) Leave a space of 24 hours minimum between massage sessions (professional, or those you do at home), and your pet should not have eaten within 90 minutes of any massage session. Always avoid putting pressure directly on the spine or joints



Effleurage: Use the palm and heel of your hand with your fingers together and slightly raised. In a continuous movement, stroke along the lay of the coat with gentle, continuous pressure through the larger muscle groups. Begin in the neck, then shoulders and forelimbs. After that, perform the stroke along either side of the spine (**not** directly making contact with the vertebrae), then move to the muscles in the hips, down through the hindlimbs.



Raking: Splay your fingers and thumb and stroke along the lay of the coat with pressure in your fingertips. This stroke will allow you to go a little bit deeper. Use this stroke after you've completed Effleurage as a preparatory stroke, warming up the muscles in each region - the neck/shoulders/forelimbs and the hips/hindlimbs. You can also perform this stroke in the intercostal muscles in between your pet's ribs.



Tapotement: Gently tap like you're playing a piano through the small muscles of the face and legs and any area where there is muscle atrophy.

