

# **A Report on the Current State of Veterinary Physiotherapy Regulation in the UK**

## History:

In March 2012 BEVA met with a group of animal musculoskeletal paraprofessionals; Society of Osteopaths in Animal Practice (SOAP), McTimoney Chiropractic Association (MCA), McTimoney Animal Association (MAA) and Associations of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT) to discuss common concerns relating to the treatment of animals with musculoskeletal conditions. Primarily animal welfare, the impact of unqualified/uninsured practitioners and how complicated the industry had become – for those working in it and for owners.

Elsewhere the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Review of Minor Procedures Regime (RMPR) project meant that the first meeting of all stakeholders across a wide group of veterinary paraprofessionals was organised by LANTRA so that all Musculoskeletal groups could come together in an open forum.

Following this meeting groups split off to discuss their requirements for self-regulation leading to an overarching body which could eventually regulate the industry.

The MSK (physiotherapy) group, which includes both educational bodies and special interest groups have met to discuss and agree aspects of regulation which include: minimum educational entry level required to be an animal/veterinary physiotherapist, Day One Competencies, Scope of Practice and Standards of Proficiency. A full list of groups and their websites can be found at the end of this article.

## Currently.

With all the groups currently involved in the delivery of MSK therapies to animals it is easy for owners and veterinary surgeons to become confused and find it difficult to decide whom to use.

There is no legal requirement for anyone to hold any qualification to call themselves a veterinary physiotherapist. There is also no legal requirement for anyone to be human trained before working on animals. The legal requirement is that all those who offer animal/veterinary physiotherapy may only work with a veterinary referral. Veterinary surgeons make their own decision on whom to use but due to the confusion, that choice needs to be informed.

The welfare of the animal is paramount and veterinary surgeons and owners should have access to a register of properly trained veterinary physiotherapists. Those who offer animal/veterinary physiotherapy must be qualified to an accepted academic and practical level, which includes the knowledge of when to refer back to the veterinary surgeon. These practitioners must be members of a credible professional association. The associations must have an elected executive, a robust Code of Conduct and Disciplinary procedure and a membership which reflects the requirements agreed by the MSK (Physiotherapy) group: a minimum standard of training, day one competencies, scope of practice and standards of proficiency.

Eventually it is envisaged that the overarching body which will govern ALL MSK groups will be responsible for overseeing training, professional standards and behaviour. Over

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the years there have been courses set up that have taken students with relevant first degrees onto Postgraduate Veterinary Physiotherapy programmes. These students include veterinary nurses, veterinary surgeons, physiotherapists, chiropractors and osteopaths. Admission via accreditation of prior learning is also an accepted route. Recently there have been a number of undergraduate degree programmes that allow students direct entry into the industry.

With more industry accredited Higher Education courses now available it will be easier for veterinary surgeons and owners alike to be able to check the qualifications of those people offering their services as a musculoskeletal practitioner and therefore be assured that the paraprofessionals treating their animals are correctly qualified, competent and knowledgeable.

As the situation progresses we will endeavour to keep the public, therapists and relevant organisations up to date.

## **Educational Bodies:**

1. Canine and Equine Physiotherapy Training (CEPT)  
[www.ceptraining.co.uk](http://www.ceptraining.co.uk)
2. Justo Development  
[www.justodevelopment.com](http://www.justodevelopment.com)
3. Harper Adams University  
[www.harper-adams.ac.uk](http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk)
4. The College of Animal Physiotherapy (TCAP)  
[www.tcap.co.uk](http://www.tcap.co.uk)

## **Special Interest Groups and Organisations:**

1. The National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists (NAVVP)  
[www.navp.co.uk](http://www.navp.co.uk)
2. The Institute of Registered Veterinary and Animal Physiotherapists (IRVAP)  
[www.irvap.org.uk](http://www.irvap.org.uk)
3. The Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT)  
[www.acpat.org](http://www.acpat.org)
4. The International Association of Animal Therapists (IAAT)  
[www.iaat.org.uk](http://www.iaat.org.uk)
5. The Association for the Scientific Study in Veterinary and Animal Physiotherapy (ASSVAP) [www.assvap.com](http://www.assvap.com)