



RAMPP Scope of Practice

Introduction

This document has been written under the current legislation and guidelines of: The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, The Veterinary Surgeon Exemptions Order (2015) and The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP). The aim of the document is to make sure that registrants are working within their individual scope of practice and within the overall scope of the physiotherapeutic professions.

The scope of practice of the profession of animal musculoskeletal therapy is a dynamic and constantly developing process, based on research and evidence and has the best interest of the patient / client at the heart. It is referred to as practising 'physiotherapy' in this context to align itself with the definitions of the Veterinary Surgeons Act and to avoid confusion, but includes all physiotherapy, osteopathic and chiropractic techniques used in the treatment of animals.

It is, therefore, not appropriate for the profession to list the modalities available or practised as this will ossify the profession; prevent development of practice and maintain out of date and potentially dangerous practices (CSP 2004)

Rule 1 Musculoskeletal therapists (practising physiotherapy on animals) shall only practice to the extent that they have established, maintained and developed their ability to work safely and competently and shall ensure that they have appropriate professional liability cover for that practice

Rule 2 It is essential that all animal therapists make themselves aware of the relevant sections of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and the Veterinary Surgery (exemptions) Order 1962 that relate to the provision of physiotherapy.

1. Scope of practice of the Animal Musculoskeletal Therapy Professions (physiotherapy as defined by the exemptions order)

The scope of practice adheres to the overall scope of the profession and retains its links to the three core skills:

- Manual therapy (e.g. massage, mobilisation and manipulation)
- Electrotherapy (e.g. ultrasound, laser and neuromuscular stimulation)
- Exercise and movement (e.g. hydrotherapy and gait re-education)

Animal musculoskeletal therapists are required to demonstrate key professional attributes such as clinical reasoning and decision making – attributes which define the core competence of the profession; such professional expertise is further refined through post qualifying practice and continued professional development (CPD). A profession's scope of practice encompasses the services its members are educated, competent and insured to provide. The overall scope of the animal musculoskeletal therapy profession encompasses all individual therapists' scopes and sets the outer limits of practice for all therapy practitioners.

Animal Musculoskeletal practitioners can ensure they are working within the scope of the profession of physiotherapy if they can either:

- Identify how their practice is related to one of the core skills of physiotherapy and/or
- Identify a 'responsible body of opinion' within the profession asserting that a modality they choose to practice safely and effectively is also used by other musculoskeletal therapists. It is expected that the practice has been evaluated or that there is research to show benefit to clients.

2. Scope of the Individual

Contrasting clinical profiles for generalist and specialist practitioners helps to further develop an understanding of scope of practice:

Scope of practice in practical terms encompasses all elements that form a clinical intervention, including assessment, evaluation of the patient and their goals, treatment given, together with advice and training. As such, all elements within the scope of practice are covered by Professional Liability Indemnity.

3. Defining Individual Scope

Within the overall scope of animal physiotherapy, individual therapists practice within their own individual scope.

Registrants need to consider their individual scope of practice in relation to individual clients and circumstances. When presented with a client's animal, the therapist undertakes a personal risk assessment – as part of the overall assessment – and asks themselves the following key questions before proceeding;

- Is the animal safe?
- Is the handler / rider safe?
- Am I safe?
- Are the environmental conditions satisfactory?
- Can I justify the decisions I have made during the assessment? E.g. has the research and
- experiential evidence been considered?
- Can I identify the most appropriate approach for the client's animal?
- Do I have the correct balance of skills, knowledge and experience to be competent in my chosen approach?
- By answering the above questions, the physiotherapist:
- identifies and determines the limits of their own competence *
- demonstrates an understanding of the scope of the profession of physiotherapy.
- illustrates an awareness of other professional's expertise / other approaches which may be of more benefit to the patient.
- ensures every interaction is a learning experience, which will not only inform, but may change and develop that individual's own scope of practice.

* An information paper 'Interim Guidance on Competence' has been produced by the Learning and Development Function and can be accessed either via the CSP website or in hard copy from the CSP's Enquiry Handling Unit 020 7306 6666 or enquiryhandlingunit@csp.org.uk

Individual therapists in accordance with the RAMP's professional standards must ensure the effectiveness of their practice.

4. Seeking advice re scope of practice

Most animal musculoskeletal therapists practice within the known and understood scope of the profession. However, on occasions the practitioner may have doubts as to whether their practice lies within or outside the scope.

Rule 1. They should consider the following:

- is this practice related to the core skills of physiotherapy?

- is there a responsible body of opinion within the animal physiotherapy profession which asserts the modality in question is used safely and effectively by other animal musculoskeletal therapists?

Registrants should then seek further advice as required from RAMP

5. Exploring new developments

In exploring new developments, the following guidelines should be considered:

- the new modality, technique or philosophy is clearly based upon the core of physiotherapy
- evaluation research is being or has been undertaken into the innovative practice and it has been shown to be beneficial
- education and training relevant to the practice should be undertaken by the therapist(s) using it
- registrants exploring new ideas should seek out other members and other professionals who are involved in exploring the same or similar ideas. They should discuss with them the effects of the new approach, the theoretical underpinning, the uses and contraindications, the educational training and professional issues relating to the areas being investigated and published research that has been carried out
- registrants should at all times recognise the responsibilities of their professional practice, i.e. they should always aim to benefit the client through the exercise of their professional knowledge and skills acquired through training and experience.

References

- 1) Eraut M (1994) Developing professional knowledge and competence. The Falmer Press
- 2) Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (2002) Rules of Professional Conduct, CSP, London
- 3) The Curriculum Framework, (2002) CSP
- 4) The Scope of Practice of Physiotherapy, PA44 (2004), CSP, London
- 5) Physiotherapy and Complementary Medicine PA48, (2001), CSP, London
- 6) Veterinary Surgeons Act, (1966), RCVS, London.
- 7) The Veterinary Surgeon Exemptions Order (2015), RCVS, London.