

# HOW TO TRAIN IN.....

## Physiotherapy for Animals



We are frequently asked for advice on what training and qualifications are required to become a Veterinary or Animal Physiotherapist (in the UK). This page has been compiled to answer some of the most common questions to become either a:

- Chartered Physiotherapist specialising in animal physiotherapy, or
- Veterinary physiotherapist or Animal physiotherapist (Non-Chartered physiotherapist route).

If you've any further queries please email [info@taranet.co.uk](mailto:info@taranet.co.uk) and we will try to help, or alternatively contact the organisations listed at the end of this page for further advice.

### **Are qualifications needed at all to become an animal/veterinary physiotherapist?**

Yes and no! The titles 'animal physiotherapist' and 'veterinary physiotherapist' aren't currently protected by law in the UK and in theory anyone can call themselves an animal or veterinary physiotherapist.

It should be noted that there are various animal manipulation-related courses that can be undertaken that do not lead to widely recognised qualifications. It's therefore advisable to check to see what professional association your animal physiotherapist is a member of - the four leading ones are listed here:

- (1) Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy,
- (2) National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists,
- (3) Institute of Registered Veterinary and Animal Physiotherapists
- (4) International Association of Animal Therapists).

These four associations do require certain qualifications to be achieved - more information below.

However, the title 'Chartered Physiotherapist' is protected by law and can only be achieved by obtaining certain recognised qualifications. A Chartered Physiotherapist is someone who has undergone thorough training to achieve their status and has the necessary knowledge to practice human physiotherapy. You may then do further specific acknowledged training in animal or veterinary physiotherapy.

### **What qualifications do I need & how do I get them?**

#### 1. Chartered Physiotherapist

To become a chartered physiotherapist you need to train as a human physiotherapist at University and upon successful completion of your degree course, become a State Registered Physiotherapist (registering with the Health Professions Council). A typical physiotherapy course may comprise 3-4 years of full-time study and will include clinical placements. There are some programmes which allow for part-time study, and it is also possible with a relevant degree, to study for an accelerated physiotherapy degree programme.

Once you are a member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, you can then specialise and train to become a Veterinary or Animal Physiotherapist. NB. You will normally have to practice as a human physiotherapist prior to and during specialisation.

## 2. Animal Physiotherapist or Veterinary Physiotherapist (for Chartered Physiotherapists only)

### **2. 1. Qualifications to become a Veterinary Physiotherapist -**

Hartpury College offer a MSc and Post Graduate Diploma in Veterinary Physiotherapy. Minimum entry includes: You will need to have an Honours Degree or equivalent in human physiotherapy, plus be a member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.

Upon successful completion of the Hartpury course (Postgraduate Diploma is part-time over 2 years, with the Masters being part-time over 3 years) you can then call yourself a 'Veterinary Physiotherapist', and apply for 'Category A' membership of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT) - see 2.2 below.

Liverpool University also offer a Post Graduate Diploma and MSc in Veterinary Physiotherapy - more information can be found at their website here. Successful completion will also allow you to apply for 'Category A' membership of the ACPAT.

### **2.2 The Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT)**

The ACPAT is a Clinical Interest Group of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) and represents the interests of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy. You will need to complete regular, relevant Continuing Professional Development too, in order to maintain your membership of the ACPAT.

## 3. Other Animal / Veterinary Physiotherapy courses (open to non-Chartered Physiotherapists)

### **3.1 The College of Animal Physiotherapy**

Offer a 'Diploma in Animal Physiotherapy', and includes both distance learning and practical placements. Successful completion of the course allows you to become a member of the International Association of Animal Therapists.

### **3.2 Harper Adams University College**

- Offer an undergraduate course - BSc Veterinary Physiotherapy. This 4 year course is recognised by the National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists (NAVPP).

Successful completion of this course allows students the opportunity to join the NAVP (no requirement to complete a postgraduate course). Entry requirements include 3 A-Levels at ABB (Biology at A, plus one other science subject), together with a minimum of 4 weeks animal handling experience especially with dogs and horses.

- At a postgraduate level, there is MSc/Postgraduate Diploma in Veterinary Physiotherapy. The MSc is a three year part-time course, and the Postgraduate Diploma is a two year part-time course. Candidates are normally expected to have a minimum of a 2:1 in an animal science or health related subject degree plus have animal handling experience. Veterinary Surgeons are welcome to apply, as are applicants with extensive significant relevant work experience. Successful completion of the course(s) will allow membership of the National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists.

### **3.3 Canine and Equine Physiotherapy Training (CEPT)**

Established since 2009, CEPT provides an 'Advanced Certificate in Veterinary Physiotherapy' course. Students can become members of the Institute of Registered Veterinary and Animal Physiotherapists (IRVAP).

### **3.4 Writtle College**

An innovative four year programme of study, which allows students to progress through a high quality course at undergraduate level directly into a fourth year at masters level, finishing with an MVetPhys Veterinary Physiotherapy.

At completion of the three year undergraduate programme, students can (if successful) then have a professional qualification in equine or canine massage and do not have to complete the fourth year for the masters qualification.

The Integrated Masters programme allows students to apply for membership of the National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists.

### **3.5 Justo Development**

Justo Development Ltd will be offering externally accredited courses in "equine physiotherapy and rehabilitation" and "small animal physiotherapy and rehabilitation". These courses are hosted at Berkshire College of Agriculture and start in May 2015. Graduates of this course can gain membership of ASSVAP and will be externally regulated by The Animal Health Professions Council (AHPC).

## **What benefit is there in first training as a human physio - I want to work with animals?**

1. You will be able to be a State Registered Physiotherapist and become a member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (and use the title 'MCSP') - these are necessary to train as a Veterinary Physiotherapist with the University of West of England (Hartpury College) and to achieve ACPAT membership.

2. You will also be able to work with humans thus increasing your knowledge and experience. Plus you can work with both the animal and its owner in combination, e.g. horse and rider could receive physiotherapy together to achieve optimum performance.

4. It is only Chartered Physiotherapists (trained in human physiotherapy) once they have received the relevant training in animal therapy who can officially state that they are members of the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT).

But what if you really do not want to work with people as a physiotherapist? If instead you only want to work with animals, then choosing a course that will enable you to become a member of one of the four leading associations as listed earlier will help you to have the credentials to receive referrals from Veterinary Surgeons and legally work with animals.

## **What difference does being a Chartered Physiotherapist make to a customer?**

As there are several types of animal therapists available, it can sometimes appear confusing to potential customers who're deciding on the most appropriate treatment for their animal. Being a Chartered Physiotherapist means that you're not only suitably qualified to carry out physiotherapy, but will have to maintain up to date knowledge through Continuing Professional Development\*. By proving that you've undertaken a rigorous training and achieved nationally recognised qualifications, potential customers know that they're going to receive a good standard of expertise. Plus a Chartered Physiotherapist who's a member of the ACPAT will be professionally regulated not only by them, but also the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy - this may provide reassurance to your potential customers.

Additionally being a registered Member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (MCSP) (or Fellow of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (FCSP)), will mean that customers know that you will be governed by a professional code of conduct, and are covered by professional liability insurance\*.

\*Members of other veterinary/animal physiotherapy related associations may also complete Continuous Professional Development and also have appropriate insurance - check with each for their individual details.

## **Will a Vet refer cases to me?**

Veterinary Surgeons are only likely to refer customers to you for physiotherapy treatment, if you are fully professionally qualified. Also, most pet/animal insurance companies will only cover physiotherapy in their policies where it's carried out by a professionally qualified animal/veterinary physiotherapist.

**Remember** - It is an offence for any person, other than the owner of the animal, to treat an animal unless the permission of the vet in charge of the case or to whom the animal would be referred is sought and obtained.

A fully qualified Veterinary/Animal Physiotherapist will always work within the permission of and liaise with the Veterinary Surgeon of the animal.

## **What salary and working conditions can I expect as an animal/veterinary physiotherapist?**

Salaries will depend on workload and therefore can vary widely. As a rough guide, initial consultation sessions (30minutes to 2hours) can cost from £20 to £70 and follow-up consultations (30minutes to 1 1/2 hours) can cost from £20 to £60. This can also depend on location.

Although positions do sometimes become available in large veterinary practices or private animal physiotherapy practices, most animal/veterinary physiotherapists are self-employed. As a physiotherapist you could work full or part-time, however, you are likely to need to work flexibly to suit the customer. Treatments may take place in stable-yards, veterinary surgeries or hospitals or for small animals, you may also be in the customer's home.

## **Contact Links:**

[Association of Chartered Animal Physiotherapists](#) or Tel: 01962 844390

[Association for the Scientific Study of Veterinary and Animal Physiotherapy](#)

[Canine and Equine Physiotherapy Training](#)

[Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#) or Tel: 0207 7306 6666

[Harper Adams University College](#) or Tel: 01952 820280

[Justo Development](#) or Tel: 07876 715959

[International Association of Animal Therapists](#)

[Institute of Registered Veterinary & Animal Physiotherapists](#)

[National Association of Veterinary Physiotherapists](#)

[The College of Animal Physiotherapy](#)

[Royal Veterinary College](#) or Tel: 01707 666333

[University of West of England \(Hartpury College\)](#)

[Writte College](#)

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