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## Physical conditioning tips for a happy dog

### Regular conditioning, incorporating stretching and massage can help prevent injuries to your dog

You wouldn't expect a seasoned athlete to perform without stretching and warming up their muscles before and after a training session or competition. The same consideration should be given to our canine companions if expected to compete in canine sports or even go the extra distance on a rigorous hike or run.

Physical conditioning involves not only exercise, but also stretching, and warm-up and cool-down exercises. Conditioning exercises and canine massage can greatly improve the overall health of our dogs and can prevent serious injuries. The benefits of an exercise program are many—physically conditioned dogs perform better in competition and sports and have less incidence of injury. An exercised dog is a happy dog as physical activity gives them an appropriate outlet for energy, reduces hyperactivity as well as behaviour problems relating to boredom.

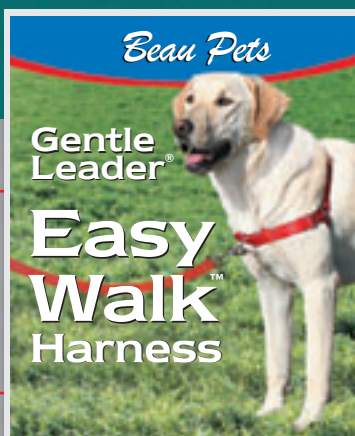
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# PROUD SUPPORTER

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## Where to exercise your dog

The location where you exercise your dog is an important consideration. Choose areas that are safe and away from traffic. Ideally, choose an area that is grassed and can provide soft and stable footing. Avoid paved and concrete surfaces as these are hard on joints and bones and can scrape and be abrasive to paw pads.

## Warm-ups and cool-downs

A warm-up session prepares your dog for physical activity and a cool-down session can prevent muscles getting tight after physical activity. Warm ups and cool downs don't need to be long. You only need three to five minutes for each session.



### The Rub

Begin with a gentle rub of your dog's entire length of the body. Start along the spine and then the rest of the body. Use a gentle pressure—not hard or firm.



### The Gentle Spin

Have your dog turn one complete spin to each side. Use food as a lure to get her to do this.

### Neck Stretches

Have your dog sit in front of you but facing away. With one hand gently supporting the back of her neck and the other lightly holding her muzzle, gently lift her head to an upward looking position. Then repeat downward and then left and right.

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## Get with the Program

The four basic components to a canine conditioning program are nutrition, strength training, endurance training, and event training. With any physical program, your dog will need a high quality super-premium food to help her maintain energy and achieve a toned physique. In each area of conditioning, it is important to start slow and gradually progress at intervals as your dog shows she is able to progress. Never push your dog beyond her physical limits, as this can cause serious injury. Perhaps we should remember the fifth element to a conditioning program—have fun!

Strength training should be conducted on nonconsecutive days three times a week for about fifteen minutes per session. Some strength training

exercises include short, intense retrieving sprints on land or in water for a full body workout and uphill running for hind leg conditioning.

Endurance training is any aerobic activity several times a week for about thirty minutes per session. Exercises can include distance running or distance swimming. (These exercises are aside from retrieving for strength.) Take care not to run or swim your dog for longer than she can physically handle to avoid injury or exhaustion.

Your dog will greatly benefit in his performance in any sport through strength and endurance training. While all sports require an agile and sound body, you will need to determine where your dog needs the most work in his particular sport and practice in those areas. Another benefit is that you will benefit from increased physical activity.



## The Lean

With your dog leaning against your leg, use one hand just in front of your dog's back leg for support, guide her front end to one side around your body and hold the position for about three seconds before switching sides. Use food as a lure to get her to face the proper direction.



## Back Leg Stretch

Place one hand directly above the knee joint, and the other on the lower part of the leg around the hock joint. Lift the leg upwards so that the knee is bent. Push gently upwards and backwards with the hand positioned above the knee joint. As always, err on the side of caution with this particular stretch. Continue this motion with each leg. Hold this position for three seconds.

## The Warm Trot

Once you've completed the stretches, take your dog for a trot for about fifty to seventy paces as an aerobic warm-up.

See next issue for  
Tips on Dog Massage



## Front Leg Stretch

With your dog standing sideways in front of you, pick up the front leg by the elbow and gently extend it straight out and then hold it past the elbow as you extend it back. Continue this motion with each front leg. Hold this position for three seconds.



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