

ANIMAL REHABILITATION

Sometimes we receive an inquiry from a physical therapist about using their physical therapist title when providing animal rehabilitation services. In the regulatory world, the legislation and regulatory requirements are always the foundation for College responses.

What is the legislative framework?

Physical therapists in British Columbia are regulated under the [Health Professions Act](#) (HPA) which regulates the provision of health services to people. The HPA defines “health profession” as a profession in which a person exercises skill or judgment or provides a service related to: (a) the preservation or improvement of the health of individuals, or (b) the treatment or care of individuals who are injured, sick, disabled or infirm. It is clear from the duty and objects of the HPA that the duty of the College relates to serving and protecting the public and does not extend to animals. In addition, the [Physical Therapists Regulation](#) defines physical therapy as “...the treatment of the human body by physical or mechanical means...”.

Although individuals with a physical therapy background may pursue training to provide animal rehabilitation, the level of qualification or experience in animal rehabilitation does not change the scope of activities regulated under the HPA. The treatment of animals is outside the scope of permitted activities under the HPA and the *Physical Therapists Regulation*.

Use of Title

Only registrants of the College are authorized to use the reserved titles “physical therapist, physiotherapist or PT”. You must not use the title of physical therapist or physiotherapist or any derivative of that title when practicing outside the scope of practice of physical therapy. If you provide animal rehabilitation, you must not use the title “physical therapist” or “physiotherapist” when providing care to animals.

Who regulates the treatment of animals?

The College does not have jurisdiction under the HPA to regulate the provision of treatment to animals. The [College of Veterinarians of British Columbia](#) (CVBC) under the provincial [Veterinarian’s Act](#) (the Act) exclusively

governs the delivery of veterinary services. The Act defines the scope of practice of veterinary medicine:

"veterinary medicine" means the art and science of veterinary medicine, dentistry and surgery, and includes... (a) the diagnosis and treatment of animals for the prevention, alleviation or correction of disease, injury, pain, defect, disorder, or other similar condition.

This means the diagnosis and treatment of animals, including rehabilitation, are activities that fall within the exclusive scope of practice of veterinarians and must be carried out in accordance with CVBC's legislation, rules and standards.

If you are interested in providing animal rehabilitation you are encouraged to contact CVBC. This would allow you to practice in your area of interest using aspects of your education as a physical therapist and to be governed by the appropriate agency and regulation. But remember, when you provide care to animals you must not use the title physiotherapist, physical therapist or PT as you are not providing physical therapy care as defined in the legislation.