

Feline Rehabilitation

A field poised for dramatic growth

by Lynne Friedmann

In recent years, a young field of veterinary medicine known as rehabilitation has been generating buzz among veterinary professions and the pet-owning public. This specialty, which found its initial application treating horses and dogs, is now poised for tremendous growth meeting the needs of feline patients.

Cats are the number-one household pet in the United States, with an estimated 95.6 million cats found in 45.4 million American households, according to the American Pet Products Association National Pet Owner Survey, covering the years 2013–14.

Common reasons cats need rehab

Cats can greatly benefit from rehabilitation following orthopedic surgery (e.g., for fractures or joint reconstructions) as well as neurologic disorders, such as trauma in the nervous system. But, far and away, the primary reason cats require rehabilitation is some sort of muscular-skeletal condition, such as osteoarthritis (OA). It is a condition more common in cats than one might expect.

In a retrospective study, data suggests that 20 percent of cats of all ages have some level of OA. In another study, Texas A&M researchers found evidence that in cats 10 years of age and older, the prevalence of OA is 90



While there is not yet an official field of feline rehabilitation, there has been a trickle-down effect from canine rehab.

