

Meet Toby, a recent addition to the Tripawd community. Toby is a nine year old mixed breed . I adopted him when he was 4 months old from ARPO (Alliance for Responsible Pet Ownership), a local rescue group.



This past June I noticed a lump on his right elbow. After many vet visits and a preliminary surgery to remove the mass it was determined that he had a grade 2 soft tissue sarcoma. Amputation was “curative” and meant we could get on with our lives.

The surgery went well and Toby was recovering nicely so we met with a rehab therapist. I used the Tripawds website to find Dr. Arielle Pechette Markley. She did a full evaluation of Toby. We discussed everything from diet, supplements, massage, stretching and exercises. She put together a rehabilitation plan with weekly goals and activities. Here is the plan for weeks 1 and 2:

Weeks 1 & 2

- Goals: Increase soft tissue length and flexibility, maintain muscle mass/reduce muscle loss
- At home heat application for 5-10 minutes, followed by gentle massage to hip and thigh muscles, followed by gentle passive range of motion (PROM) - once daily.
- Start passive stretching of hip and stifle muscles, as well as left forelimb muscles daily, focusing on hamstrings, quadriceps and left scapula mobility
 - I recommend the book/DVD “*The Healthy Way to Stretch Your Dog, A Physical Therapy Approach*” by Sasha Foster.
- Start easy strength exercises, if tolerated, every other day, or alternate exercises and do a couple daily
 - Sit to stand on the floor
 - Low elevated stand
 - Triceps “push-ups”
 - Sideways walking
 - Bow



Here are a few of the exercises in more detail.

Sideways walking

Good for inner (adductors) and outer (abductors) shoulder muscles. This will help protect the elbow from the extra force placed on it due to increased weight-bearing on the left forelimb

- Have Toby walk sideways, BOTH directions, for 5 – 10 feet



Elevated stand

This will encourage weight shifting onto his hind limbs in a gentle manner.

- Using a treat, ask Toby to place his front paw on a low elevated surface, such as a low stair or thick book. Make sure the surface is not slippery. Once up, guide Toby's head forward and back using the treat right at his nose.

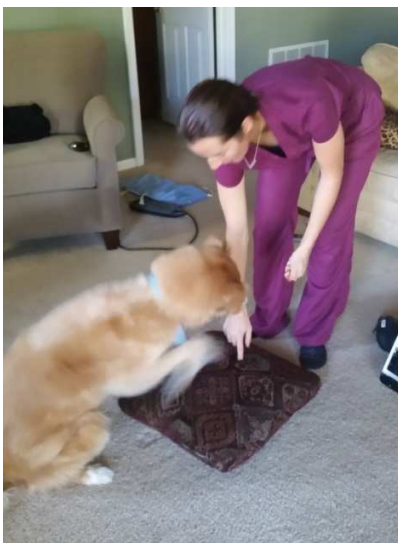
- Hold this position for 5-10 seconds (longer if this gets easy) - 3 repetitions daily.

Bow

Increases spine flexibility and extension

- Ask Toby to stand; reward. Lure him into a bow by placing a cookie between his front legs; reward. Hold for 10-20 seconds.

- You can also use a chair or low table and use a treat to lure his front end under the object to help him drop into the bow.



Each exercise works different muscle and helps Toby build strength as he recovers from his surgery. I learned that you don't need fancy equipment to accomplish this. With a little help, some creative thinking, plenty of treats and dedication we can get Toby back in shape and hopefully prevent future injuries.