

Stretching your dog is important for their health and flexibility. Not only does it promote better range of motion, but better circulation, and more oxygen to the muscles.

If your dog is especially sensitive during a stretch, please seek advice and instruction from your Veterinarian or Canine Rehabilitation Specialist. Special care must be taken to avoid injury.

GUIDELINES: Before you stretch your dog always ensure the muscles are warmed up properly. This can be accomplished with a short walk, a gentle massage or a warm moist towel on the area to be stretched. A warm muscle stretches better than a cold muscle, and reduces the risk of injury from over stretching.

Think Low and Slow. Stretching should **NOT** be rushed, and you should closely watch your dog's response. Begin with a small range of motion, and slowly increase the range. Stop the stretch when you start to feel slight resistance and hold. If your dog pulls away the stretch may be too aggressive, or the area may be sore. Back off intensity until you can stretch the muscle for 5-30 seconds at a time. **Always** hold the limb you are stretching with both hands. Open palms and gently cup the limb to avoid squeezing or stressing the joint. Never force a joint or muscle.

Stretching

FRONT LIMB STRETCHES

Try these exercises to target the shoulder, back, chest, biceps and inner leg muscles.

Repeat: 2-3 times on each side
Time: 5-30 seconds

EXTENSION

1 Use one hand to support the wrist and the other hand to support the elbow.



2 Use an open palm, and gently stretch the leg forward until slight resistance is felt.



FLEXION

1 Slightly bend the elbow before moving the limb back toward the hind leg.



2 Rest the elbow on the chest, and gently adjust the limb backward until slight resistance is felt.



ABDUCTION

1 Use one hand to support the wrist and the other hand to support the elbow.



2 Gently move the leg outward to the side until slight resistance is felt. Take care to ensure there is no rotation in the torso.



HIND LIMB STRETCHES

Try these exercises to stretch the quads, hip flexors, hamstrings, glutes and low back muscles.

Repeat: 2-3 times on each side
Time: 5-30 seconds

EXTENSION

1 Support the upper thigh with one hand under the knee, and gently cup the ankle with the other hand.



2 Move the hind leg to a naturally straight position; continue extending the leg back until slight resistance is felt. Make sure there is no low back rotation, or movement from the other hind leg.



FLEXION

1 Support the upper thigh with one hand under the knee, and gently cup the ankle with the other hand.



2 Slightly bend the knee and bring it up to the rib cage. Straighten the leg until slight resistance is felt.



ABDUCTION

1 Support the thigh with one hand under the knee, and gently cup the ankle with the other hand.



2 Flex the knee slightly, then raise the leg up (fire hydrant motion) until slight resistance is felt. Make sure there is no low back rotation with this stretch. Use your knee to prevent the dog's back from rotating.



QUAD

1 Support the upper thigh with one hand under the knee, and gently cup the ankle with the other hand.



2 Slowly move the knee back until slight resistance is felt. The knee should maintain a slight bend. Use your knee to support the low back to prevent extension. The knee will not be able to go as far back as compared to the hip extension stretch.



NECK AND SPINE STRETCHES

Try these exercises to stretch the spine, abdominal, neck, shoulder and back muscles.

Repeat: 2-3 times on each side
Time: 5-30 seconds

NECK

1 The dog may either stand or sit for this exercise. Place a treat in one hand and lure the head straight up. Place the other hand gently on the shoulders to make sure you feel a good stretch through the neck.



2 Lure the dog's head straight down between the front legs. Keep the spine straight, and strive for straight purposeful movements.



SIDE

1 Dog should be in a sit position. Place a treat in one hand and lure the head straight up. Place the other hand gently on the shoulders to make sure you get a good neck stretch.



2 Lure the dog's head straight down to the side. Avoid bending the entire spine. The stretch should initiate from the shoulders and neck.



SPINE

1 Start with the dog standing. Place a treat in one hand and lure the head straight out. Place the other hand gently on the dog's hips. Strive for an extended reach without movement.



2 Lure the dog's head toward the hips. Stretch as far as you can keeping the dog's front legs forward facing.



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