



Here Fido...Time To Hit The Treadmill

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By Mary Beth Walker - KOMO TV 4

SEATTLE - Sunday afternoon a 7-year-old dog named Wilbur went for a walk in Seattle, but there was nothing ordinary about his walk.

To begin with, Wilbur has a partially torn ACL in his right knee and it can be quite painful for him to take a step. In addition to that, the Labrador cross went walking on a treadmill that was submerged underwater.



The treadmill is called the "Aqua Paws" Hydrotherapy System, and it is brand new to the Seattle area.

It can help rehabilitate dogs with arthritis, dogs that are overweight dogs, and dogs that have had orthopedic surgery or back surgery.

"When they are immersed in water, they are held up buoyant by the water and it decreases the pressure on their joints," explained Dr. Alicia Lamb who specializes in canine rehabilitation.

The water is also warm, which helps ease pain. "It's warm water," said Dr. Lamb. "We heat it to 88 degrees so it increases circulation to painful or inflamed joints."

It seems to work because Wilbur's tail is wagging in the water as he walks with renewed energy.

"Up until this point there hasn't been any therapy of this kind available," said Dr. Lamb. "We can help strengthen muscles by decreasing the weight they are using, therefore they use the leg more correctly and they can gain muscle strength and be much more comfortable without medication."

Therapy like this has been used on people for years, but this is the first time it's been available to dogs and cats. That's right, if your cat can tolerate being submerged in water they too can use the treadmill for physical therapy.

Dr. Lamb is excited to have a new way to help ease animals' pain.

"People really love their pets and they want them to be living a long, healthy, happy life. What we know is in the older years arthritis sets in and they become uncomfortable. Rather than put them on a life of medication we can use this physical therapy system to make them more comfortable and live happier."

When Wilbur's session is over, he's showered, shampooed, massaged, and dried before heading home.

Right now the "Aqua Paws" system is only available at Sunset Hill Veterinary & Rehabilitation Center in Ballard.