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Animal Rehab Association of Canada Position Statement: Acupuncture and Dry Needling of Animal Patients by Physiotherapists Engaged in Animal Rehabilitation Practice

Physical therapists with training and certification in human acupuncture and/or dry needling techniques and who are additionally credentialed in animal (canine or equine) rehabilitation / physiotherapy and hold additional certification in animal acupuncture and/or dry needling are competent and capable of administering needling techniques to the animal patient for the purpose of treating musculoskeletal, neurological, and cardio-respiratory disorders or as a measure to improve functional health status.

Background:

Acupuncture and Dry Needling are physical modalities commonly used in human physiotherapy practice for musculoskeletal, neurological and cardio-respiratory disorders. Physiotherapists use clinical reasoning based on initial assessment findings and best available evidence to select the interventions and therapies used within their treatment plan. Treatment effectiveness is evaluated via outcome-based measures, which inform selection of interventions throughout the duration of treatment.

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association position statement on acupuncture and dry needling offers the following:

“Acupuncture has been utilized as a physiotherapy intervention in Canada since the 1980s. In recent years, physiotherapists have also incorporated additional dry needling techniques, such as Intra Muscular Stimulation (IMS) within their practice.”¹

Physiotherapist have a strong background in anatomy, physical evaluation, clinical reasoning, and physical diagnosis. Animal rehabilitation training programs are available for physiotherapists to learn animal anatomy, conditions, and pathologies, enabling physiotherapists to transfer their physiotherapy skills and knowledge to an animal patient. A multitude of educational resources for physical therapists to learn the practice of acupuncture and/or dry needling on people exist in Canada and world-wide. Additional courses are available for physiotherapists to learn to localize acupoints on animals. All education combined provided physiotherapists with the skills and knowledge to utilize acupuncture and dry needling techniques to an animal.

Approved February 18, 2026

Resources

1. The Canadian Physiotherapy Association, Position Statement: Acupuncture and the Use of Dry Needling Techniques in Physiotherapy, Approved June 2006.
https://physiotherapy.ca/app/uploads/2022/08/acupuncture-and-the-use-of-dry-needling-techniques-in-physiotherapy_en-doc.pdf
- i. The term ‘dry needling’ refers to therapeutic techniques using solid needles, and does not include injection of a substance into the tissues.