

Letter From the President

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The ARSIG continues to work toward several goals as outlined on our strategic plan. The most recent accomplishment is establishment of a “Frequently Asked Questions” page on the ARSIG website. I would estimate that I receive approximately 2 to 3 emails a week requesting information on the ARSIG, and most people who email are seeking to find information on whether or not the practice of animal physical therapy is legal in their respective states. Very few state Physical Therapy Practice Acts specifically address animal physical therapy. One must also keep in mind that it is important to reference each state’s Veterinary Practice Act, as well, to determine what scope, if any, non-veterinarians may have in the treatment or rehabilitation of animals, and if allowable, what level of supervision may be needed.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of state PT Practice Acts do not mention animal physical therapy at all or are vague in the language of who (or what) physical therapists can treat. The terms “human” or “person,” written in a state’s PT Practice Act indicates that patients are humans only, and therefore, practice on animals is outside the legal scope of a physical therapist in that state. The terms “patient,” “individual,” and “client” do not necessarily exclude animals but do not definitively include them, and the therapist wishing to treat animals in those states is left in a gray area. If a state Veterinary Practice Act limits the scope of treatment of animals to veterinary professionals only, or only under direct supervision of a veterinarian—that adds another layer of confusion.

It is very hard as ARSIG president to answer any of the emails I get requesting information regarding a particular state, and I typically refer the writer back to the Practice Acts...which I admit is probably very frustrating for them. However, it is not within the purview of the ARSIG to interpret any state’s Practice Act. This confusion and frustration and limitations on the practice of physical therapy on animals is exactly why the completion of the Animal Rehabilitation Practice Analysis and Standards of Clinical Practice, the continued work towards the goals of the ARSIG as outlined in our strategic plan, and the investment, support, and help from our members is so vital in helping to advance our belief that properly trained physical therapists can and should be allowed to provide rehabilitation to those animals in need of therapeutic intervention to help them return to the highest level of function they can. Just like our human patients.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are a few of the FAQs that can now be found on the ARSIG website. For the entire list, please access the website.

1. Can Physical Therapists treat animals in my state?

- a. **You will need to access your state’s PT and Veterinary Practice Acts in order to determine this. Currently, the only states that specifically address and allow physical therapists to practice on animals are: CO, NE, and NH.** In these states, specific criteria are outlined in the Physical Therapy and Veterinary Practice Acts of the

state. In these states, PTs can practice with animals and use their PT credentials.

- b. In other states, animal rehabilitation provided by PTs is in the Veterinary Practice Acts and is under scope of practice of veterinarians. These states are FL, GA, IL, ME, and MI. Practice by PTs regarding supervision by veterinarians and requirement to practice in the veterinarian’s practice location or elsewhere, is specified in the Veterinary Practice Act. These specifics are clearer for the Veterinary Practice Act in some states than in others. However, you must also check the PT practice act in those states as you may not be able to practice on animals as a *physical therapist* (ie, use your credentials) in a state.
- c. In some states, the Veterinary Practice Act states that PTs can practice under the area of complementary, alternative, or integrative therapy. These states are MS, OK, TN, and VA. However, you must also check the PT practice act in those states as you may not be able to practice on animals as a *physical therapist* (ie, use your credentials) in a state.
- d. In most states the practice acts are not definitive. Interpretation of the Practice Acts is not always clear, and it is your responsibility to ensure you are not practicing outside of your scope in your state. *Doing so could result in a Cease and Desist mandate from the veterinary profession and potential jeopardy to your PT license.*
- e. **Physical Therapy Practice Acts by State**
<http://www.apta.org/Licensure/StatePracticeActs/VeterinaryPracticeActs>
<https://rehabvets.org/state-practice-acts.lasso/>
 and choose State Practice Acts - Professionals or go to your search engine of choice and enter the state of interest and “veterinary practice act.”

2. What animals are typically treated by Physical Therapists if allowed?

- a. The most common species is canine, however, equine and feline are often referred for services, as well. It is not unheard of for animals such as donkeys, cows, goats, etc to be referred for rehabilitation.

3. Where is Animal Rehabilitation typically provided?

- a. Veterinary hospitals or clinics with a rehabilitation practice.
- b. Patient/client’s homes/barns, with varying levels of supervision/medical clearance from a veterinarian.
 - i. Supervision can range from onsite and directly supervised by a veterinarian to offsite with permission of the veterinarian depending on each state’s PT and Vet Practice Acts.
- c. Private clinics or settings.

4. Is there malpractice insurance available for Physical Therapists who are treating animals?

- a. HPSO MAY provide coverage for PTs in states that have language in their practice acts that specifically address animal rehab, ie, CO, NE, NH.
- b. Physical Therapists working in veterinary clinics MAY be

covered under their employer's insurance.
Do not assume you are covered by personal liability insurance or business insurance. It is your responsibility to determine if you are covered for treatment of animals that typically depends on the practice acts of your state.

If YOU have a question regarding animal physical therapy that is not addressed on the website, don't hesitate to contact an ARSIG officer—we are here to help.

ORTHOPAEDIC RESIDENCY/FELLOWSHIP SIG

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the updated guidelines and changes from ABPTRFE that have delayed programs' initiative to making improvements to the programs in the event the guidelines are promptly changed.

A strategic goal of the ORF-SIG is to identify processes in residency and fellowship education that are impacting programs and their participants and to serve as a liaison among programs, AOPT, and ABPTRFE. The Orthopaedic Residency and Fellowship Special Interest Group would like to thank all of the individuals who participated in survey and provided information about their respective programs to share with members and stakeholders that will positively impact the growth of residency and fellowship education.

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