

YOUR DOG'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING IS IN YOUR HANDS!

(Edited from an original article in the PODS Newsletter December 2011, written by Sharon Pattinson, [Manchester Canine Massage Therapy](#))

Whether you are training or competing, it is all too easy to just bring our dogs out of their cages and expect them to carry out a strenuous activity without thinking of the damage it can do.

The main reason we warm our muscles up is to prepare them for a more strenuous activity. By increasing the temperature of the muscle, we are helping to make them loose, supple and pliable; it also increases the heart rate and respiratory rate, which then encourages blood flow around the body to the muscles. All this helps prepare the muscles, tendons and joints for the sport you are competing in thus preventing an injury.

A warm up for our dogs should be no less than 5 minutes.

An example of a good warm up;

1. Start with a fast walk leading into a trot
2. Rub the muscles as if you were lighting a fire stick
3. Carry out some retractions and protractions (stretches) of your dogs legs
4. For dogs doing agility run them over some low jumps first

Once your dog has finished their activity you need to cool the muscles down. This is to promote recovery and return the dog's body back to how it was before. When our dogs take part in an activity such as flyball and agility their body goes through a number of stressful processes and muscle fibers, tendons and ligaments may get damaged.

When your dog has finished their activity you need to take some time to cool your dog down and don't just put them straight back into your vehicle. The force that pushes the blood back to the heart is reduced significantly which sometimes leads to waste products sitting in the muscles which can cause swelling and pain. Cooling your dog down will help to reduce this by keeping the blood circulating helping the muscles, tendons and ligaments to repair by supplying fresh oxygen and nutrients.

The cool down should take into account the same muscles that were used during the sports activity. An example of a good cool down routine is;

1. A slow trot to a walk
2. Rub the muscles slowly (not like a fire stick)
3. Carry out some retractions and protractions (stretches) of your dogs legs
4. If it is cold and you have a dog coat put it on

For people to explore further there is a good page with diagrams on

http://www.agilitynet.co.uk/health/practicaladviceformaintenanceandpreventionofinjury_lizharris.html