

**With the hot and humid weather recently I've been trying to keep myself, and my pets cool. Is it good for them to join my family in the lake or pool?**

Now that summer is here, you are eager to lounge poolside or head to the beach; but what about your pets? Make sure that in extreme heat and humidity, like we have been having the last few weeks, your animals have access to FRESH, clean water to drink and shade at the very least. If your pet is unable to swim along with you, try filling a plastic kiddy pool for them to wade into. Two weeks ago at the Jefferson County Fair, animals and exhibitors made extra efforts to stay cool. Cool water, fresh feed, fans, and even a hose bath helped keep the animals comfortable at their temporary home on the fairgrounds.

Besides being a cooling relief from the summer heat, swimming is also a great form of exercise. It increases heart rate, is easier on joints, and can be done indoors or outdoors. Due to this, it is also a popular option for physical therapy from injuries.

If you imagine trying to train a dog or a horse to use an elliptical.... you can see why using aqua therapy sounds like a good alternative. Animals have the natural instinct to swim when in deep enough water so minimal training is involved. SUNY Morrisville, which is just a short drive from Watertown, utilizes aqua therapy in their Equine Rehabilitation Center (MSCERC). The facility welcomed its first equine patient in 2011. As you walk in the doors, you see what looks like an extensive indoor hotel pool room. Horses enter the lap pool via ramp and then are guided by handlers outside the pool using a set of lead lines. Swimming is great cardiovascular exercise to keep equine athletes (etc. racehorses) in shape and also to help recovering from an injury or surgical procedure. By being submerged in water, there is also a decreased risk of worsening an injury by falling or bumping the affected area.

Another feature is the Aquatrainer underwater treadmill. Imagine you are jogging on a treadmill and then a chamber around your legs fills slowly with water. While you feel more resistance against your legs, you also feel relief from the pounding of your feet on the belt. This is exactly how the Aquatrainer works as a form of physical therapy for an injured horse.... on a much bigger treadmill than yours at home of course!

Check out more information on animal aqua therapy centers:

<http://animalrehabcenterofasheville.com/aquatic-therapy/>

<http://www.morrisville.edu/facilities/equinerehab.aspx>



*Photo taken at a tour of the SUNY Morrisville Equine Rehabilitation center in July, 2016*

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