



**Guide to
Professional Conduct
for
Registered
Canine Hydrotherapists**

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Notes



Guide to Professional Conduct for Registered Canine Hydrotherapists

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Introduction

A Registered Canine Hydrotherapist (RCH) is a person whose name is entered in the List of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists maintained by the National Association of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists (NARCH).

It is the responsibility of an RCH to ensure that they continue to satisfy NARCH requirements for registration and inclusion on the List and that the information supplied to NARCH is both accurate and truthful.

Failure to maintain an up to date record, or supply information requested, may result in suspension from the List. Further failure to bring a record up to date may result in permanent exclusion from the List or a requirement to begin the registration process again.

The NARCH Guide to Professional Conduct for Registered Canine Hydrotherapists is designed to protect the public interest by ensuring a high level of education and training combined with personal and professional integrity.

How to use this Guide

Whenever the word "must" has been used it indicates a rule that must be followed.

Where the word "advised" is used it indicates a guideline that it is advisable to follow but professional discretion may be used.

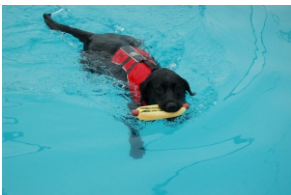
A RCH is expected to observe the provisions of the Guide to Professional Conduct for Registered Canine Hydrotherapists.

If you cannot find the guidance that you need to address a particular situation please contact NARCH for help.

1.0 Rules of Professional Conduct for Registered Canine Hydrotherapists

As a Registered Canine Hydrotherapist you are required to adhere to these 10 basic rules:

- 1 Make animal welfare your first consideration for patients committed to your care and ensure that all animals are treated humanely and with respect.
- 2 Maintain and continue to develop professional knowledge and skills. Only practise to the extent that you have established, maintained and developed your ability to work safely and competently.
- 3 Foster and maintain a good relationship with your clients.
- 4 Ensure the confidentiality and security of information acquired in a professional capacity.
- 5 Foster and endeavour to maintain good relationships with your professional colleagues.
- 6 Uphold the good reputation of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists.
- 7 Ensure the integrity of statements signed by a RCH.
- 8 Report to an appropriate authority circumstances which may put patients or others at risk.
- 9 Respond promptly, fully and courteously to complaints and criticism.
- 10 Ensure your RCH record is up to date and that you comply with registration requirements.



2.0 Your responsibilities for the welfare and care of patients

A patient is any animal cared for by a RCH acting in his or her professional capacity.

A RCH must:

- a make animal welfare their primary consideration
- b treat all patients humanely and with respect
- c never cause an animal to suffer
- d never use excessive restraint or excessive discipline
- e provide suitable hydrotherapy care taking into account the reason for referral, medical conditions, age and breed
- f obtain signed permission from the referring veterinary surgeon confirming that it is safe and appropriate for the patient to be treated with hydrotherapy
- g never treat any dog, even if only for recreation/fitness, without a veterinary surgeon's signature
- h obtain clinical history and areas of caution or concern from all veterinary surgeons involved in the patient's care
- l obtain clinical history, treatment history and instructions from any veterinary physiotherapist involved in the patient's care
- j obtain details of any other complementary therapists involved in the patient's care
- k not carry out hydrotherapy when possible benefits may be outweighed by the risk of:
 - i causing harm
 - ii worsening the patient's condition
 - iii causing distress or suffering
- l keep copies of all veterinary referral, clinical history and treatment records for a period of not less than 7 years from the last hydrotherapy session
- m fully comply with the Animal Welfare Act
- n fully comply with the Dangerous Dogs Act

A RCH who has concerns about the competence of a colleague is encouraged to discuss this through the appropriate processes in their place of work.

If the matter cannot be resolved with this initial approach the RCH must communicate their concerns to NARCH.

3.0 Your responsibilities for safe hydrotherapy treatment

3.1 A RCH must on every occasion:

- a consider the patient's medical condition, size/breed, behaviour, the limits of their hydrotherapy competence and experience and decide if it is safe to treat the patient
- b consider the patient's medical condition, size/breed, behaviour and the number of staff available and decide if it is safe to treat the patient
- c make sure that all relevant veterinary permissions, clinical history, records and patient information have been obtained before commencing hydrotherapy treatment

3.2 Welfare requirements

- a never use or attach a pole to a patient in a hydrotherapy pool. Any RCH who does this will be subject to investigation and may be permanently excluded from the Register
- b any life jacket/harness used should comply with NARCH standards. Life jackets must wrap around underneath the dog offering maximum support in a neutral spinal position, and provide good buoyancy and comfort for the dog. Equipment used should be a suitable size for the dog being treated and be in good working condition
- c Hoists - In general NARCH would not advise using a hoist. If this is unavoidable you should ensure that all staff are trained to use equipment safely and are aware of the conditions that a hoist is not suitable for. At all times a **minimum** of two RCHs must be present and one must be alongside the patient in the pool. If there is any sign of distress or anxiety the hoist must not be used
- d never leave a patient unattended. Attendance means being immediately alongside and in control of the patient. Leaving a patient, for example to answer the telephone or engage in conversation constitutes gross negligence

3.3 If the RCH is an employer he or she must:

- a ensure all of the hydrotherapy centre staff are trained in the use of disabled patient aids and in the safe handling and transport of patients so that patients can safely be assisted by any member of staff
- b ensure all hydrotherapy centre staff are trained in canine/feline first aid and hold a valid first aid certificate. All staff must complete a canine/feline first aid refresher course every 24 months to renew their first aid certification. Failure to update a RCH record before expiry will result in suspension until a valid certificate is provided



4.0 Your responsibilities to clients

The client is the person who requests hydrotherapy services for the patient – for example the registered owner, the owner's agent, an animal charity, public body or company.

4.1 A RCH must:

- a **never suggest a diagnosis to the client – in the UK it is illegal for anyone other than a veterinary surgeon to make a diagnosis**
- b ensure that clear information is provided about the arrangements and facilities available for hydrotherapy treatment
- c ensure that the client understands the hydrotherapy treatment being provided, any possible risks to the patient and has signed the terms and conditions to indicate informed agreement to treatment
- d take all reasonable care in using their professional skills to provide hydrotherapy treatment for patients
- e be satisfied that the person to whom a task is delegated is competent in that task
- f ensure the client is kept informed of patient progress, lack of progress or other issues
- g assist the client's understanding of any issues relating to the patient's treatment
- h ensure a suitable number of hydrotherapists are available to assist with any therapy to ensure the patient's well-being, given their size, breed, condition and behaviour
- i ensure other professionals involved in the patient's care are kept informed of progress, lack of progress or other issues
- j communicate any concerns regarding the patient's health or welfare to the patient's veterinary surgeon
- k if the patient shows signs of deterioration or is failing to make progress refer back to vet
- l recognise situations where the client should speak to the veterinary surgeon in charge of the patient's case and advise the client to do so
- m maintain clear, accurate, up to date and comprehensive case records
- n keep their skills and knowledge up to date by completing the required number of CPD hours per annum
- o keep within their own areas of training, qualifications and competence

4.2 The professional/client relationship is one of mutual trust and respect under which a RCH must:

- a maintain client confidentiality
- b treat the client with respect and courtesy
- c avoid conflicts of interest
- d give due consideration to the client's concerns and wishes where these do not conflict with the patient's welfare
- e recognise that clients are entitled to fully itemised accounts and provide an easily accessible and clear fee structure
- g maintain clear, accurate and comprehensive client accounts
- h ensure that insurance claims are completed accurately and in a timely manner
- l never make a false statement on any document or insurance claim
- j provide accurate information when contacted by the client's pet insurance company
- k recognise that the client has freedom of choice
- l ensure that all professional activities are covered by professional indemnity insurance or equivalent arrangements - such cover may be held individually or through an employer

4.3 Insurance requirements

A RCH must be covered:

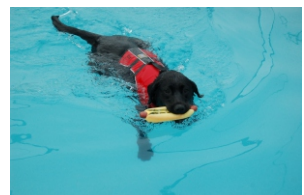
- a by third-party liability insurance for the protection of the public - this may be held personally or through your employer but it is **your** responsibility to satisfy both yourself and NARCH that the insurance held is both sufficient and current
- b by professional indemnity insurance for patients in their care – this may be held personally or through your employer but it is **your** responsibility to satisfy both yourself and NARCH that the insurance held is both sufficient and current
- c failure to update a RCH record in respect of insurance will result in immediate suspension until valid documentation is provided.



5.0 Your responsibilities to the general public

5.1 A RCH must:

- a promote responsible animal ownership
- b at all times be trustworthy and honest and uphold the good reputation of the canine hydrotherapy profession
- c cooperate with colleagues and other health professionals when appropriate
- d use their professional status to provide only factual information to the general public about canine hydrotherapy
- e accurately represent their registration with NARCH by using the post-nominal letters RCH. These post nominal letters should be removed if no longer listed with NARCH
- f advertise in a professional manner
- g ensure that all publicity, printed matter and website advertising is accurate and true
- h accurately describe the level of training or qualification of both themselves and/or employees
- i accurately describe the benefits of hydrotherapy and not overstate expected gains from treatment
- j make clear whether statements made are in a personal or professional capacity
- k not claim to represent the views of NARCH unless authorised *in writing* to do so
- l not obstruct a client from changing to another hydrotherapy centre
- m provide detailed notes within 7 days of request when a patient moves to a new centre



6.0 Your professional responsibilities to your patients and colleagues

6.1 A RCH must:

- a be present at all times when a patient is being treated or cared for. Failure to ensure this basic commitment to patients and the public may result in suspension and possible permanent exclusion from the List of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists
- b ensure that anyone who is not an RCH is closely supervised by an RCH who holds current membership and is not subject to suspension. This includes supervision of students and volunteers. The RCH is the person deemed responsible for care of the patient
- c close supervision means in the same room, actively observing and where necessary instructing/training and offering advice to the member of staff/ student or volunteer. This should be for the entire session in the hydrotherapy pool or water treadmill
- d always liaise with professional colleagues including veterinary surgeons, veterinary physiotherapists and/or hydrotherapy centres who are involved in caring for a patient
- e assist with the provision of all relevant records promptly to colleagues taking over responsibility for a patient
- f accurately represent the level of training, qualification and areas of competence of both themselves and/or employees
- g not speak or write disparagingly about another professional colleague
- h not obstruct a client from changing to another hydrotherapy centre
- i fully cooperate with NARCH officers when a request is made to carry out an audit
- k fully cooperate with NARCH when a complaint is being investigated

Hydrotherapy centres who fail to ensure guidelines 6.1 a, b and c are complied with will not be listed with NARCH.



7.0 Your responsibilities for hydrotherapy education and continuing professional development

7.1 A RCH must:

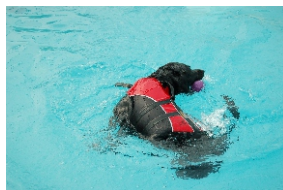
- a complete a minimum of 20 hours per annum of NARCH approved CPD. This will be monitored from January to December. Evidence of CPD hours should be uploaded onto the NARCH website for approval. Failure to do so will result in **suspension** of membership.
- b when returning to practise, or changing career direction, undertake appropriate training to ensure that they are competent to do so
- c comply with NARCH educational requirements for Registration and inclusion in the list of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists

7.2 A RCH should:

- d continue professional education by keeping up to date with general developments in hydrotherapy
- e encourage and facilitate participation of employees in CPD programmes

In the first year that an RCH becomes a member their CPD will be calculated pro rata based on the month their membership became active.

CPD can be made up of the attendance of courses, completion of online study and self reflective study or reading. Self reflective study can only make up a maximum of 5 hours of the annual requirement.



8.0 Your premises, facilities and maintenance

- a hydrotherapy centre premises must be clean and safe for staff, clients and patients
- b hydrotherapy centres must be adequately equipped for the services offered by the centre
- c you should recognise the limitations of both the size and type of hydrotherapy equipment you have available and ensure that you are able to treat a patient safely. You should take into account the patient's medical condition, size/breed and behaviour
- d your facilities should be designed to give the best possible access and service to disabled clients, visitors and patients
- e you should have suitable and safe equipment available to aid clients with disabled pets
- f hydrotherapy equipment should be regularly maintained and records of servicing/repairs should be kept for a minimum of 24 months. This requirement is in addition to any manufacturer's warranty/servicing requirements.
- g you should take advice about the operation of electrical equipment and ensure that you fully comply with electrical safety laws and pay particular attention to the safety requirements for operating equipment in wet or humid conditions
- h a risk assessment of all operations must be carried out annually. Any new activity added during the year should be risk assessed



9.0 Pool water treatment and quality

The purpose of pool water treatment is to maintain the water in a safe and pleasant condition for hydrotherapy.

9.1 A RCH should:

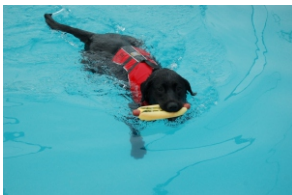
- a carry out microbiological testing monthly
- b keep the water clear
- c keep the water free from harmful bacteria
- d keep the water free from algae growths
- e ensure the water is neither toxic or irritating to patients or staff
- f have access to an industry recognised swimming pool engineer for advice/help with water treatment and equipment problems
- g adhere to NARCH guidelines for safe chemical levels and safe temperature ranges
- h carry out water quality checks at least three times per day and record the person responsible, test results and action take
- l keep water treatment records for a minimum of 7 years and make records available to NARCH when requested



10.0 Employment and staff matters

10.1 A RCH:

- a who knowingly or carelessly permits anyone to treat a patient without sufficient training or supervision will be subject to disciplinary action which could result in suspension or permanent removal from the List of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists
- b should confirm that an employee is an RCH by checking the NARCH register to ensure the person is listed as a current RCH
- c is responsible for checking annually that an employee who is a RCH has a valid Canine First Aid Certificate, valid insurance cover and has completed the required CPD and remains listed
- d employers should encourage and facilitate time for CPD/continuing education for RCH's in their employment
- e employers should, when requested by an RCH who is an employee, provide a copy of public liability and professional indemnity insurance so that the RCH can maintain their registration
- f immediately notify NARCH if an RCH has left the Centre so NARCH can amend their record
- g should not speak or write disparagingly about a colleague to a third party, since the effect is to undermine public confidence in the profession



11.0 Disclosure of information – client confidentiality guidance

- a the RCH/client relationship is founded on trust, and a RCH must not disclose to any third party any information about either the client or the patient without the clients permission
- b in circumstances where the client has not given permission for disclosure and when the RCH believes that animal welfare or public interest are compromised you should pass information to the relevant authorities. You may also consult NARCH for advice or guidance about the correct course of action
- c permission to pass on confidential information may be expressed or implied
- d permission may also be implied from circumstances, for example, in the making of a claim under a pet insurance policy, when the insurance company becomes entitled to receive all information relevant to the claim and to seek clarification if required
- e case records including video film, photographs and similar documents are the property of, and should be retained by, the RCH in the interests of animal welfare and for their own protection.
- f The Data Protection Acts of 1984 and 1998 give anyone the right to be informed about any personal data relating to themselves on payment of a reasonable administration charge
- g at the request of a client, a RCH must provide copies of any relevant treatment records, film, photos or similar
- h care is essential in writing any patient/hydrotherapy records or recording a client's personal details to ensure that the latter are accurate and that the notes are comprehensible and legible to a third party
- l disclosure of records may be ordered in disciplinary or court hearings, and NARCH may request copies of case records routinely in the course of investigating a complaint or for audit or quality control checks

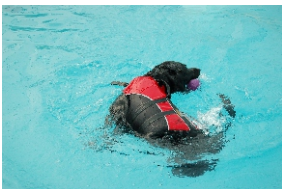


12.0 Your responsibilities under the law

A Registered Canine Hydrotherapist should be sufficiently familiar with and comply with legislation which may include, but is not limited to:

- a the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and associated orders and statutory instruments - **never suggest a diagnosis to a client – in the UK it is illegal for anyone other than a veterinary surgeon to make a diagnosis**
- b the Animal Welfare Act and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act
- c the Dangerous Dogs Act
- d the Health and Safety at Work Act, Control of Substances Hazardous to the Health (COSHH), Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and other similar legislation as it applies to the hydrotherapy centre
- e the Data Protection Act as it applies to professional and client records
- f employment, Inland Revenue, VAT and social security legislation as it applies to a hydrotherapy centre
- g any other relevant animal health or welfare legislation relating to animal health, disease control, animal breeding, public health and zoonoses
- h legislation relating to all forms of discrimination, including but not limited to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age

You will find useful web links on the NARCH website www.narch.org.uk



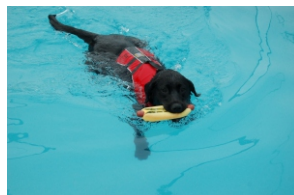
13.0 Your responsibilities if things go wrong

All clients should be actively encouraged in the first instance to discuss any problems which they may have with the hydrotherapist or hydrotherapy centre manager/owner as appropriate

A sympathetic approach should be used in response to a complaint rather than immediate denial and defensiveness. An expression of sorrow that an animal has died or that someone is distressed by what has happened is appropriate and does not in itself amount to an admission of liability

13.1 A RCH must:

- a respond promptly and constructively to any request from NARCH for comments in relation to any allegation or complaint made against them
- b promptly supply copies of any paperwork and treatment records requested by NARCH
- c be prepared to explain and justify to clients or colleagues any action or decision taken in the course of their professional activities



14.0 Fees, pet insurance and related matters

- a pet insurance schemes depend on the integrity of the hydrotherapist who has responsibilities to both the client and the insurance company. Any factors which might cause the insurance company to increase the premium or to decline a claim **must** be disclosed
- b where a patient is covered by pet insurance, the client should be advised to confirm the extent of the cover under the policy, including any limitations on cost or any exclusions which would apply to hydrotherapy treatment
- c all invoices should be itemised showing the amounts relating to goods and services provided by the centre
- d when dealing directly with the owner, or the owner's agent, it is important to obtain consent for treatment in writing on a properly drafted form. The form should include the centre's terms and conditions
- e when treating a patient covered by pet insurance the fees charged must be at the normal centre rate and any additional or administrative charges shown separately
- f completed insurance claims together with supporting documentation should be returned to the client and it is the client who should submit the claim to the insurance company
- g in cases where a client consistently refuses to pay, or delays payment, the RCH or hydrotherapy centre is entitled to refuse treatment and should notify the client's veterinary practice of the reasons for the decision
- h in cases where a client is abusive or violent towards yourself, other members of staff or other clients, the RCH or hydrotherapy centre is entitled to refuse treatment and should notify the client's veterinary practice of the reasons for the decision



15.0 Promoting your services

- 15.1 hydrotherapy centres should provide clients, particularly those new to the hydrotherapy centre, with comprehensive written information on the nature and scope of the centre's services including:
- a what services the centre is able to provide
 - b initial and ongoing costs of treatment
 - c information on the care of patients
 - d the centre's complaints-handling policy
 - e centre opening times
 - f fee or charging structures
 - g use of client data
 - h access to and ownership of records
- 15.2 the name chosen for a hydrotherapy centre should not mislead the public as to the nature or extent of the services offered
- 15.3 wording and images used for advertising, publicity materials, website or social media should be original
- 15.4 all publicity must be legal, decent, honest and truthful in compliance with the general law and the British Codes of Advertising Practice and Sales Promotion
- 15.5 you must comply with copyright law and you should obtain written permission for use of wording/images which are not owned by the centre
- 15.6 if an RCH is suspended or removed from the List of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists all references to NARCH and NARCH logos must be removed from printed materials, websites and social media with immediate effect
- 15.7 if a hydrotherapy centre is removed from the NARCH list all references to NARCH and NARCH logos must be removed from printed materials, websites and social media with immediate effect



Notes



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