



Guide to  
Professional Conduct  
for  
Registered  
Canine Hydrotherapists

# Index

Section	Page
Introduction	2
1.0 Rules of professional conduct for Registered Canine Hydrotherapists – 10 basic rules	3
2.0 Your responsibilities to your patients	4
3.0 Your responsibilities for safe hydrotherapy treatment	5
4.0 Your responsibilities to clients – part 1	6-7
5.0 Your responsibilities to the general public	8
6.0 Your responsibilities to your professional colleagues	9
7.0 Your responsibilities for hydrotherapy education and CPD	10
8.0 Your premises, facilities and maintenance	11
9.0 Pool water treatment and quality	12
10.0 Employment of staff	13
11.0 Disclosure of information – client confidentiality guidance	14
12.0 Your responsibilities under the law	15
13.0 Your responsibilities if things go wrong	16
14.0 Fees, pet insurance and related matters	17
15.0 Promoting your services	18



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

## **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 a 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.

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 should 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.
- 3 Only practise to the extent that you have established, maintained and developed your ability to work safely and competently.
- 4 Foster and maintain a good relationship with your clients.
- 5 Ensure the confidentiality and security of information acquired in a professional capacity.
- 6 Foster and endeavour to maintain good relationships with your professional colleagues
- 7 Uphold the good reputation of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists.
- 8 Ensure the integrity of statements signed by a RCH.
- 9 Report to an appropriate authority circumstances which may put patients or others at risk.
- 10 Respond promptly, fully and courteously to complaints and criticism.



## 2.0 Your responsibilities to your 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
- f obtain signed permission from the referring veterinary surgeon confirming that it is safe for the patient to be treated with hydrotherapy
- g never treat any dog, even for recreation, 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:
  - l 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 24 months from the last hydrotherapy session

***A RCH who has concerns about the competence of a colleague is encouraged to discuss this through the appropriate processes in the place of work. If the matter cannot be resolved with such an approach, any concerns should be brought to the attention of 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 and 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 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 clients can safely be assisted by any member of staff
- b ensure all of the hydrotherapy centre staff are trained in canine/feline first aid and hold a current certificate from a NARCH approved course provider
- c ensure all staff complete a short canine/feline first aid refresher course every 24 months to renew their first aid certification

### 3.3 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



## 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 agreement to treatment
- d take all reasonable care in using their professional skills to provide hydrotherapy treatment for patients
- e keep their skills and knowledge up to date
- f keep within their own areas of competence and training
- g be satisfied that the person to whom a task is delegated is competent in that task
- h ensure the client is kept informed of patient progress, lack of progress or other issues
- I assist the client's understanding of any issues relating to their animal's treatment
- j ensure other professionals involved in the patient's care are kept informed of progress, lack of progress or other issues
- k communicate any concerns regarding the patient's health or welfare to the patient's veterinary surgeon
- 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

#### 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 if requested 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.



## 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 qualifications by using the post-nominal letters RCH
- 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
- l 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



## 6.0 Your responsibilities in relation to your professional colleagues

### 6.1 A RCH must:

- a always liaise with all colleagues including all veterinary surgeons, veterinary physiotherapists and/or hydrotherapy centres who are involved in caring for a patient
- b assist with the provision of all relevant records promptly to colleagues taking over responsibility for a patient
- c accurately represent the level of training, qualification and areas of competence of both themselves and/or or employees
- d not speak or write disparagingly about another professional colleague
- e not obstruct a client from changing to another hydrotherapy centre



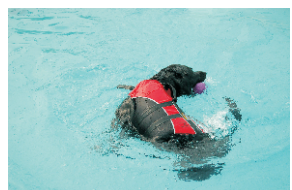
## 7.0 Your responsibilities for hydrotherapy education and CPD

### 7.1 A RCH must:

- a complete a minimum of 20 hours per annum of NARCH approved CPD
- 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



## 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 make sure that you are able to treat a patient safely, having considered 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 patients
- 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 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 keep the water clear
- b keep the water free from harmful bacteria
- c keep the water free from algae growths
- d ensure the water is neither toxic or irritating to swimmers
- e prevent the formation of undesirable smell or taste
- 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 taken
- l keep water treatment records for a minimum of 24 months and make records available to NARCH when requested



## 10.0 Employment of staff

### 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 removal from the List of Registered of Canine Hydrotherapists
- b is responsible for checking the original Certificate of Registration for any canine hydrotherapist employed. If the certificate is unavailable you should confirm that the employee is an RCH by checking with NARCH List
- c is responsible for checking annually that an employee who is a RCH has completed the required CPD and remains listed
- d 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 in normal circumstances a RCH must not disclose to any third party any information about either the client or the patient
- 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 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
- h care is essential in writing treatment records or recording a client's personal details to ensure that the latter are accurate and that the notes are comprehensible and legible
- i disclosure of records may be ordered in disciplinary or court hearings, and the NARCH may request copies of case records routinely in the course of investigating a complaint

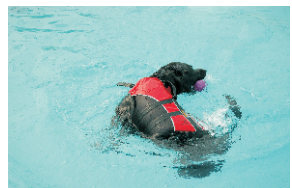


## 12.0 Your responsibilities under the law

*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](http://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 in writing on a properly drafted form
- 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 in cases where the bill is sent direct to the insurance company, a copy should be sent to the client
- 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 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 decision and 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 the provision, initial and ongoing costs of treatment
- b information on the care of patients
- c the centre's complaints-handling policy
- d centre opening times
- e fee or charging structures
- f use of client data
- g 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** *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 (see NARCH website for useful links)*





## **National Association of Registered Canine Hydrotherapists**

43 Kings Road, Shalford GU14 8JX

telephone 07859 129143  
website [www.narch.org.uk](http://www.narch.org.uk)  
email [enquiries@narch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@narch.org.uk)