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**AB-1458 Physical therapy and veterinary medicine: animal physical therapy.** (2025-2026)

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AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 24, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**NO. 1458**

Introduced by Assembly Member Wallis

February 21, 2025

An act *to add Sections 2631 and 4828.5 to the Business and Professions Code*, relating to healing arts.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 1458, as amended, Wallis. ~~Animal physical therapy.~~ *Physical therapy and veterinary medicine: animal physical therapy.*

*Existing law, the Physical Therapy Practice Act, provides for the licensure and regulation of physical therapists by the Physical Therapy Board of California (Physical Therapy Board), which is within the Department of Consumer Affairs. Existing law defines physical therapy as the art and science of physical or corrective rehabilitation or of physical or corrective treatment of any bodily or mental condition of any person by the use of the physical, chemical, and other properties of heat, light, water, electricity, sound, massage, and active, passive, and resistive exercise. Existing law makes a violation of the Physical Therapy Practice Act a misdemeanor.*

*Existing law, the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act, provides for the licensure and regulation of veterinarians and the practice of veterinary medicine by the California Veterinary Medical Board, which is within the Department of Consumer Affairs. That act makes it unlawful for any person to practice veterinary medicine in this state without a license and provides that the practice of veterinary medicine includes, among other things, the treatment of whatever nature for the prevention, cure, or relief of a wound, fracture, bodily injury, or disease of an animal. Existing law makes a violation of the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act a misdemeanor.*

*This bill would authorize a licensed physical therapist who meets specified education, training, and experience requirements to provide animal physical therapy, as specified. The bill would require the physical therapist to notify the Physical Therapy Board of their practice of animal physical therapy, as prescribed. The bill would require the animal physical therapy to be provided under either of 2 sets of circumstances involving a licensed veterinarian who has established a veterinary-patient-client relationship with the animal. The first set of circumstances would be under the direct supervision of the veterinarian at a premises registered with the California Veterinary Medical Board. The second set of circumstances would be pursuant to a referral from the veterinarian, would require the physical therapist to provide a specified written notification to the owner of the animal patient, and would require the physical therapist to hold an active practice agreement with the licensed veterinarian. The bill would require the physical*

therapist to provide a written copy of that active practice agreement to the California Veterinary Medical Board or Physical Therapy Board upon request. The bill would authorize physical therapy aides to aid the physical therapist in performing animal physical therapy, as specified. The bill would make any physical therapist providing animal physical therapy solely liable for delegated animal physical therapy tasks performed pursuant to a referral from a licensed veterinarian or by a person under the direct supervision of the physical therapist. The bill would specify that a veterinarian who issues an order for treatment for animal physical therapy is not liable for the animal physical therapy provided pursuant to that order by the physical therapist or by an aide or other assistant supervised by the physical therapist.

The bill would make certain disciplinary actions against a Physical Therapy Practice Act licensee by the California Veterinary Medical Board conclusive evidence of unprofessional conduct by the licensee under the Physical Therapy Practice Act. The bill would require the Physical Therapy Board to immediately notify the California Veterinary Medical Board of any disciplinary actions or practice restrictions placed on the license of a physical therapist who has notified the Physical Therapy Board of their practice of animal physical therapy. The bill would prohibit a physical therapist whose license is suspended, revoked, or otherwise disciplined by the Physical Therapy Board from providing animal physical therapy. The bill would specify that these provisions, among other things, do not authorize an unlicensed person to practice animal physical therapy, except for physical therapy aides as described above.

The bill would make a failure to comply with specified supervision requirements imposed by the bill or any regulation adopted pursuant to these provisions unprofessional conduct and grounds for disciplinary action, as prescribed. The bill would prohibit a physical therapist providing animal physical therapy from supervising or delegating any animal physical therapy, except as specified. The bill would specify that these provisions, among other things, do not authorize a physical therapist to provide any other services or perform any acts which constitute veterinary medicine.

The bill would define various terms for the purposes of the above-described provisions. By imposing additional requirements and prohibitions under the Physical Therapy Practice Act and the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act, a violation of either of which is a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

~~Existing law, the Physical Therapy Practice Act, provides for the licensure, approval, and regulation of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants by the Physical Therapy Board of California within the Department of Consumer Affairs. Existing law, the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act, establishes the Veterinary Medical Board within the Department of Consumer Affairs for the licensure and regulation of veterinarians and the practice of veterinary medicine.~~

~~This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to authorize a physical therapist licensed under the Physical Therapy Practice Act who holds an advanced certification in animal physical therapy to provide animal physical therapy under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian upon the recommendation of the veterinarian.~~

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: ~~no~~yes Local Program: ~~no~~yes

## THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

### **SECTION 1.** Section 2631 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:

**2631.** (a) For purposes of this section, "animal physical therapy" means the practice of physical therapy, as defined in Section 2620, except that it is performed on an animal.

(b) A licensed physical therapist who has held an active physical therapist license in the state for at least one year may provide animal physical therapy, consistent with the scope of physical therapy practice, to an animal patient according to all of the following:

(1) The physical therapist holds an active license in good standing issued by the board.

(2) The physical therapist has completed a training program that consists of:

(A) At least 100 hours of instruction or coursework pertaining to animals in the following areas:

(i) Assessment and treatment planning.

(ii) Behavior.

(iii) Biomechanics.

*(iv) Common orthopedic and neurological conditions.*

*(v) Comparative anatomy and physiology.*

*(vi) Restraint and handling skills.*

*(vii) Therapeutic modalities and exercise.*

*(viii) Zoonotic and infectious disease.*

*(ix) Pain recognition.*

*(x) Identification of conditions that indicate a need for a referral back to the veterinarian with whom the physical therapist holds a practice agreement.*

*(B) Not less than 40 hours of clinical training under a licensed veterinarian or a licensed physical therapist who has provided animal physical therapy.*

*(3) The physical therapist has completed at least 125 hours of providing animal physical therapy under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian or licensed physical therapist who has provided animal physical therapy, or the physical therapist has practiced animal physical rehabilitation pursuant to Section 2038.5 of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations for one year. Experience gained prior to January 1, 2026, shall count toward the experience requirement under this paragraph.*

*(4) The physical therapist provides animal physical therapy pursuant to Section 4828.5.*

*(5) The physical therapist notifies the board of their practice of animal physical therapy on a form prescribed by the board.*

*(6) (A) The physical therapist completes \_\_\_\_ hours of continuing education every two years in the practice of animal physical therapy.*

*(B) Continuing education may be obtained from any provider authorized under Section 2649 or paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 4846.5.*

*(7) The premises where the physical therapist performs animal physical therapy shall comply with any local regulations, ordinances, and zoning requirements for an animal facility.*

*(c) A report of any final disciplinary action against a licensee of this chapter by the California Veterinary Medical Board under Section 4883 shall be deemed as conclusive evidence of unprofessional conduct by the licensee under Section 2660.*

*(d) The board shall immediately notify the California Veterinary Medical Board of any disciplinary actions or practice restrictions placed on the license of a physical therapist who has notified the board of their practice of animal physical therapy.*

*(e) Physical therapy aides, as defined in Section 2630.4, may aid the physical therapist in performing animal physical therapy consistent with the requirements of Section 2630.4.*

*(f) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (e), this section does not authorize an unlicensed person to practice animal physical therapy.*

*(2) This section does not prohibit a licensed physical therapist from providing animal physical rehabilitation pursuant to Section 2038.5 of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations.*

*(3) This section does not authorize a physical therapist to provide any other services or perform any acts that constitute veterinary medicine.*

*(g) A physical therapist whose license is suspended, revoked, or otherwise disciplined by the board pursuant to Section 2660 shall not provide animal physical therapy.*

*(h) (1) A physical therapist providing animal physical therapy shall be solely liable for any delegated animal physical therapy tasks performed pursuant to a referral from a licensed veterinarian, as defined in paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 4848.5, or by a person under the direct supervision of the physical therapist pursuant to subdivision (e).*

*(2) A veterinarian who issues an order for treatment for animal physical therapy shall not be liable for any animal physical therapy provided pursuant to that order by a physical therapist or by an aide or assistant supervised by the physical therapist.*

**SEC. 2.** Section 4828.5 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:

**4828.5.** (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Animal physical therapy" has the same meaning as defined in Section 2631.

(2) "Direct supervision" means the supervisor is physically present at the location where the animal physical therapy is to be performed and is quickly and easily available, and the animal patient has been examined by a licensed veterinarian at a time consistent with the practice of veterinary medicine and with the particular delegated animal physical therapy.

(3) "Indirect supervision" means the supervisor is not physically present at the location where the animal physical therapy is to be performed but has given either written or oral instructions, also known as direct orders, for treatment of the animal patient, the animal patient has been examined by a licensed veterinarian at a time consistent with the practice of veterinary medicine and with the particular delegated animal physical therapy, and the animal patient is not anesthetized, as defined in Section 2032.5 of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations.

(4) "Referral from a licensed veterinarian" or "referred by a licensed veterinarian" means an oral or written instruction from a licensed veterinarian in the state for a licensed physical therapist to provide animal physical therapy to an animal patient.

(5) "Practice agreement" means a written agreement between a physical therapist performing animal physical therapy and a licensed veterinarian that includes both of the following:

(A) Policies and procedures to ensure adequate coordination and communication between the licensed veterinarian and the performing animal physical therapy, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(i) Appropriate communication and safety protocols or procedures specific to providing animal physical therapy consistent with standards of good veterinary practice.

(ii) The location or premise where services are to be provided, including any range or remote setting.

(iii) The availability of consultations between the veterinarian and the physical therapist providing animal physical therapy.

(iv) Any protocols for referring an animal patient back to the licensed veterinarian.

(B) An agreement that the physical therapist will practice animal physical therapy and will not practice any type of veterinary medicine.

(b) A physical therapist licensed pursuant to Chapter 5.7 (commencing with Section 2600) who meets the requirements of Section 2631 may provide animal physical therapy according to either of the following:

(1) The physical therapist provides animal physical therapy under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian at a premises registered with the board pursuant to Section 4853 and the supervising veterinarian has established a veterinary-patient-client relationship with the animal patient.

(2) The physical therapist provides animal physical therapy pursuant to a referral from a licensed veterinarian who is in good standing in the state and who has established a veterinary-patient-client relationship with the animal patient, and both of the following conditions are present:

(A) The physical therapist holds an active practice agreement with a licensed veterinarian.

(B) The physical therapist notifies the owner of the animal patient in writing that the physical therapist providing animal physical therapy is licensed by the Physical Therapy Board of California and may only provide animal physical therapy.

(c) A physical therapist with an active practice agreement required by paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) shall provide a written copy of the active practice agreement to the board or the Physical Therapy Board of California upon request.

(d) A veterinary-patient-client relationship need not be established on the same premises where the delegated animal physical therapy is performed.

(e) In addition to any other acts constituting unprofessional conduct by the licensee pursuant to Section 2660, failure to comply with the requirements for supervision under this chapter or any regulation adopted pursuant to this chapter shall be considered unprofessional conduct and grounds for disciplinary action pursuant to Section 2660.

(f) A physical therapist whose license is suspended, revoked, or otherwise disciplined by the Physical Therapy Board of California pursuant to Section 2660 shall not provide animal physical therapy.

(g) Except as provided in subdivision (e) of Section 2631, a physical therapist providing animal physical therapy pursuant to this section shall not supervise or delegate any animal physical therapy.

*(h) (1) Except as provided in subdivision (e) of Section 2631, this section does not authorize an unlicensed person to practice animal physical therapy.*

*(2) This section does not authorize a physical therapist to provide any other services or perform any acts that constitute veterinary medicine.*

**SEC. 3.** *No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.*

~~SECTION 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation to authorize a physical therapist licensed under the Physical Therapy Practice Act who holds an advanced certification in animal physical therapy to provide animal physical therapy under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian upon the recommendation of the veterinarian.~~