

Dog Mobility Plus!

Find out how a set of wheels can put your dog back on the road again.

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If your dog no longer gets around well on four paws, a set of wheels can put it on the road again.

Canine wheelchairs offer various features, but they share common qualities. First, they're custom-built according to the dog's weight and dimensions. They're also lightweight, padded where they might chafe, and washable.

Wheelchair makers suggest that dogs with normal front-leg strength have the most potential to use a cart well. If your dog can walk on its front legs with its rear legs, a wheelchair could restore mobility.

The chairs fasten with straps around the dog's middle or shoulders. A tubular metal frame wraps around the hind end, with extensions holding the wheels about as far back as the rear feet would be. Canted, or slightly tilted, wheels sometimes offer better handling.

A cart won't make a recovering dog dependent on wheels, experts say. Instead, it can help a dog live a dog's life; it can chase its pals or toys, explore the yard, even urinate and defecate without leaving the chair.

Fabricators also make wheelchairs for dogs needing front-end help.

Dogs in wheelchairs need supervision. The chairs can get stuck or tip, stranding your dog. Once comfortable with the cart, dogs tend to forget they have only two feet on the ground and often run down stairs, but most need help to climb steps.

Partially disabled dogsthose that can navigate but aren't steady on their feetcan benefit from a sling, which fits around the rear end like a diaper and has a pull strap on top. This variation on lifting the dog with towel helps take the weight of the front legs and allows a dog to climb stairs more easily with owner's help.

Slings also can help dogs needing front end assistance and those unsteady on all fours.

For information about helpful equipment, contact these companies:
Dewey's Wheelchairs for Dogs
Doggon' Wheels
Eddie's Wheels
Four Flags Over Aspen
K-9 Carts
Surgi-Sox
Walkabout