



Trimming Nails

Trimming nails is an important part of your pet's grooming routine. Long nails on a dog can painfully break or split while long nails on a cat can grow into their toe pad. Extremely overgrown nails will alter the way your pet walks and can affect the back and legs.

Training

Most cats and dogs resist their nails being trimmed. It may feel uncomfortable to them or they remember a negative experience in the past. This is why training is important. Use positive reinforcement with special treats (treats that your pet loves that you only use for training) to make the training experience a good event in your pet's life. If you notice your pet is uncomfortable at the next step, go back a step and end the training session on a good note.

1. First, you must teach your pet that handling of the feet is a good thing. Have daily training sessions where you give special treats when you touch the feet. If they are very sensitive, start by touching the upper leg



and work your way down to the feet. Depending on your pet, it may be days or weeks before you can even hold the foot.

2. Gradually increase your handling of the feet so that you are able to hold each toe, flex the nail and put gentle pressure on the paw. All the while, your pet should be praised and given special treats.

3. Once your pet is comfortable having its feet handled, introduce the nail trimmers. Let him sniff them. Work on touching the legs, then feet, then toes with the trimmers. This will show them that the clippers don't always mean pain.



4. If your pet is no longer afraid of the trimmers and allows you to freely touch its feet, then apply pressure with the clippers without actually trimming a nail. Go slowly and give plenty of treats if your pet seems anxious with this part.

Once your pet is comfortable with that, begin trimming the nails. Start by taking a small portion of the tip off of one nail. As your pet becomes accustomed to this, trim a small portion of additional nails. With each trimmed nail, your pet should be praised and given a treat.

Trimming the Nails

In trimming the nails, it is important to know that there is a nerve and blood supply in each nail. This is commonly called the "quick" and is pinkish in color.

It is easily seen in white nails but can be difficult to locate in dark-colored nails.



Your pet's nails will need to be trimmed regularly (about once a month) but will vary between individuals. If your pet has overgrown nails, the nails will need to be trimmed weekly and only have a small portion trimmed each time. This is to avoid the quick which has extended into the long nail.

White nails: Identify the quick and trim in the white part.



Black nails: Trim small amounts off the tip of the nail until you see a grey, pink, white or even black dot forming in the center of the nail. This "bull's eye" is an indicator that you are getting close to the quick. Don't cut any further.



Don't forget the dewclaws – the nails on the inside of the feet farther up the leg. They are usually present on just the front feet, but some pets have them on three or four. There may even be more than one present on the same foot. If your dog doesn't have them, they were removed when he was a newborn.

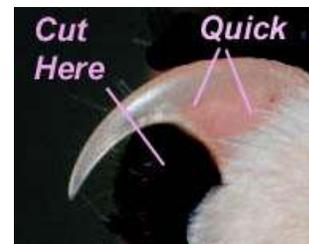


Cat Nails

Use your fingers to extend the nail. Place your thumb on the top of the base of the nail and your index finger on the pad. Lightly squeeze for the nail to be extended. The thicker portion at the base of the nail contains the quick.



Trim the long, curved portion of the nail tip.



Cutting the Quick

Cutting the nerve and blood supply is often called "quicking" since the quick has been cut. When this happens, it is painful and will bleed. Even a skilled professional may misjudge the location of the quick and trim too far back or the pet pulls his foot back at just the wrong time.

To stop the bleeding, apply pressure and styptic powder such as Kwik Stop to the nail. Kwik Stop is found at local pet stores and also has some pain relieving properties. If you do not have a styptic powder available, you can use corn starch or flour instead.

At the Clinic

Bring your dog into the clinic often so that we can give treats and make the clinic a happy place. As your pet becomes more comfortable, we can start doing the same technique as you would at home to train your dog to accept nail trimming. This method will take longer depending on how often you bring him in. However, we are happy to help.