



KRONENWETTER
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Trimming Your Dog's Nails

Nail trimming is an important aspect of grooming your dog. Your dog's nails should be trimmed when they grow long enough to touch the ground when the dog walks. Dogs that aren't very active might require weekly nail trimming. Dogs that are regularly walked on sidewalks might never need their nails trimmed. Dewclaw nails need to be trimmed because they don't wear down from walking. Ask your veterinarian or a veterinary technician to teach you the safest way to trim your dog's nails.

Nail trimming should be a calm, stress-free experience for you and your dog. Teaching your dog to accept having his or her feet touched can help make nail trimming easier. Ideally, dogs should be introduced to nail trimming when they are puppies. You might have to regularly massage your dog's paws for a few weeks before your dog will allow you to trim his or her nails. When introducing your dog to nail trimming, just clip one or two nails a day, followed by treats or a play session.

Tools

A nail trimmer with a scissor-type cutting action works best, one type is called Miller Forge. If your dog won't tolerate the use of clippers, you can try using a nail grinder or dremel tool—an electric tool that sands down nails. Grinders offer control, but they take more time to use than clippers, and some people and dogs dislike the sounds and vibrations of grinders. An emery board or nail file can also be used. This method is quiet but takes longer than using clippers or an electric nail grinder.

Preparation

For nail trimming, choose a time when your dog is relaxed or even sleepy, such as after a meal or a period of activity. Collect your clippers or grinder, some dog treats, and something to control bleeding in case it occurs (see below for suggestions and more on bleeding). If necessary, find an assistant to help you hold your dog. Ensure that other pets aren't around and that your dog won't be distracted by activity outside nearby windows.

Technique

To trim your dog's nails, hold your dog's toe firmly but gently. While calmly praising your dog and/or offering a treat, hold your clippers so that they will cut the nail from top to bottom, not side to side. Then insert a very small length (no more than 1/16 inch) of nail through the trimmer's opening. Avoid cutting the quick, which is the pink area within each nail that contains nerves and blood vessels (see image below). Accidentally cutting the quick will cause pain and bleeding, probably causing your dog to yelp and struggle. This is a good time to stop trimming, but first apply styptic powder to the bleeding nail tip. Press the powder onto the nail tip to ensure that it sticks. If you don't have styptic powder, dab the tip of the nail on a bar of soap or in a little flour or cornstarch. If bleeding continues for more than a few minutes, call your veterinarian.

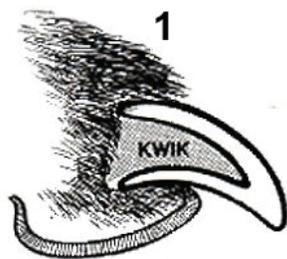
If your dog experiences discomfort or pain during nail trimming, you will probably have trouble trimming his or her nails in the future, so make sure that you keep the experience as pleasant as possible and clip

just the tip of each nail. If your dog struggles, talk to him or her calmly. If this doesn't help, take a break and try trimming some nails later. Never punish your dog for not cooperating, and be sure to reward good behavior with praise or a treat.

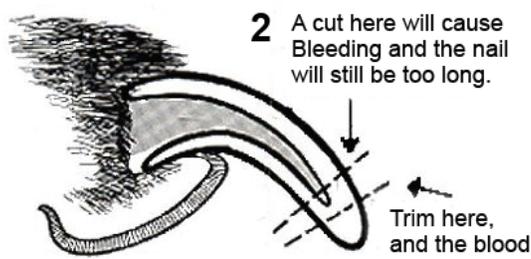
Fearful or Aggressive Behavior

Some dogs become fearful or aggressive during nail trimming. Watch carefully for signs of distress, such as panting, drooling, trembling, whining, freezing, cowering, tail-tucking, growling, or snapping. If your dog will not accept nail trimming, do not force him or her to submit. You can ask your veterinarian or a professional groomer to trim your dog's nails. You can also ask a certified applied animal behaviorist (CAAB), a veterinary behaviorist (DACVB), or a certified professional dog trainer (CPDT) for help with your dog's underlying behavioral issues.

If your dog experiences pain from nail trimming, you will probably have trouble trimming his or her nails in the future, so make sure that you clip just the tip of each nail.



The Blood Supply (Kwik) in a short nail.



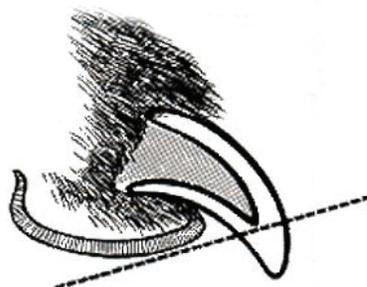
Note how the Blood Supply gets longer as the nail grows.



If you clip or file, a little bit off the long nail, every few days, the blood supply will continue to recede.



As the nail gets shorter so does the blood supply.



Only when the nail is kept short, can it be trimmed without bleeding. If the same cut had been made on the long nail in number 2, it would have caused bleeding.



A properly trimmed nail.