

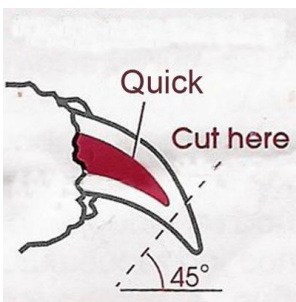
## Dog Nail Care

Clipping your dog's nails is generally a simple routine, like combing their coat, brushing their teeth, cleaning their ears and bathing. These all should be continual positive experiences that should be familiarized, trained, and worked since puppyhood. Trimming nails is not as difficult as people imagine. If you make a mistake, it's not the end of the world. In fact, trimming nails too short seems to be more traumatic for the trimmer than the trim-ee. There are always exceptions, such as the otherwise docile and obedient dog that simply will not tolerate having toenails clipped or even having their feet handled at all. Sometimes this aversion can be traced to a painful experience involving the nails or feet. However, you still must get nails clipped!

Puppies can easily have their feet handled by doing handling exercises many times daily. Apply a small amount of pressure to each of the toes, rewarding positive behavior. Using the controlled hold can be of great benefit to you and the puppy for the simple procedure of trimming the puppy's nail. Try to get your pets used to having their feet handled when they are young. For puppies, have them sit quietly in your lap as you play with their toes, examine their nails, feel between the pads, lift the foot, turn the foot over, and generally get intimate with every bit of foot anatomy. They will soon find this procedure boring and allow you to do it without getting stressed.

Behavior modification techniques for older dogs, as explained by Katherine A. Houpt, DVM, Ph.D., will help ease the trauma for pet and you when toe nail clipping is due. Begin by first touching the dog on its leg or the place closest to the nails that does not cause it to object. Reward this tolerance with a very small, very tasty bit of food. Next touch just a little closer and again give a small food reward. Repeat many times, each time moving closer to the toes and stopping when the dog seems about to begin to resent the intrusion. At the second session, which should be on the following day, begin again. When the dog finally allows you to touch its toes, move on to the next necessary step: Picking up the foot. When this can be done without arousing objection, touch the toenail clipper to the toes. Remember to reward the desired behavior as you progress.

Eventually you should be allowed to begin clipping one nail at a time. Proceed with clipping one nail a day, and always reward the dog for allowing you to touch and handle the feet. If you have the patience and time learn to recognize how far you can go with each day's training. In time, the dog should submit to a routine pedicure.



\*Cut the nail about ¼" away from the pink mark indicating the blood supply.

\* If the dog has dewclaws, remember to trim those. They can embed into the dog's leg and become infected if left untrimmed.

If you cut too short and the nail bleeds apply Kwik Stop or draw the nail across a bar of softened soap to control bleeding.

Always use nail trimmers that are made specifically for trimming pets nails.

