

Importance of Trimming Your Pet's Nails

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A solid pet-grooming schedule includes more than just bathing and brushing your pet. To protect both the owner and animal, nails/claws should be clipped regularly. Trimmed nails are a clear sign of your pet's health and hygiene. For squeamish owners, vet offices and professional groomers will perform the task, but nail trimming is a simple procedure if done correctly.

Since nail trimming can cause anxiety for many pets, it is advised that owners handle their pet's feet and trim their nails from an early age so that they become accustomed to the process.

How Often Should I Clip My Pet's Nails?

Unlike their outdoor counterparts, indoor pets' claws need more frequent attention. Animal claws naturally wear down through activity, but when kept indoors, animals need their nails trimmed more frequently since they are less active and generally walk on softer surfaces.

Cats may try to relieve this problem by sharpening their claws — on your sofa, carpet, or curtains. A sign that your dog's nails are too long is they can be heard, making a clicking sound, when your pet walks on hard surfaces.

Dogs need their nails clipped on a regular basis, approximately every 3-4 weeks; however, it is common for owners to wait too long in between trimmings which can lead to a number of health issues for the animal. For cats, a routine claw trimming every 10-14 days will keep your pet healthy. Birds, rabbits, guinea pigs, and other exotic small pets need their nails trimmed regularly as well, something that most people don't realize.

Failing To Trim My Pet's Nails

Consistent nail maintenance isn't simply cosmetic. In some cases, nails can cause pain and trigger irreversible damage to the animal.

When people think of the damage a pet's nails can cause, most consider scratches on hardwood floors, carpet snags, and claw marks on furniture. However, long nails create potential issues for animals — a splayed foot, reduced traction, deformed feet, and even injured tendons over time. As long nails hit the ground, it puts force on the foot and leg structure. This force can potentially lead to arthritis and ongoing pain.

The growth pattern of a dog's nails forms a curved shape. If left untrimmed, the claws will eventually curve under the dog's paws and dig into the skin, creating pain when they walk. Anyone who has ever experienced an ingrown toenail can attest to the amount of pain this will cause. To compensate for this discomfort, dogs will put more weight on their back paws than their front. This can lead to sore muscles and joints, backaches, and eventually arthritis.

Longer nails can also snag carpets and get caught on fabrics. The outer enamel of the nail can wear away when trying to pry the foot when snagged. This can lead to exposure of the inside of the nail

known as the quick. Once exposed, potential injuries and infections are likely.

Even though their veterinarian recommends trimming cat's claws, many pet owners do not adhere to this. To be fair, it can be a difficult experience for both owner and animal. In some instances, cats can be so destructive that owners choose to declaw them, leaving the cat defenseless if caught outside or in an altercation with another animal. The solution is to reduce the cat's ability to damage by scratching with a regular nail-trimming routine. Keeping a cat's nails trimmed will potentially prevent nail damage to home furnishings by reducing their urge to claw.

How To Trim Your Pet's Nails

There are two parts of the nail: the living, pink quick and the hard, outer material known as the shell. The quick supplies blood to the nail and runs to its core. The nerves at the core cause bleeding and pain when cut. Regular trimming means the quick will recede from the end, creating a short quick. A short quick is better for your pet's well-being and is easy maintenance.

There are several types of nail trimmers specifically designed for your pet; however, you can use whatever type you are most comfortable with or whichever works best for your pet. If you've never trimmed your pet's nails before, your veterinarian or vet tech can offer you a lesson on how to do it properly.

To trim your pet's nails at home, follow these steps:

1. Hold a paw firmly but gently, placing your thumb on the pad of a toe and your forefinger on the top of the toe on the skin above the nail, making sure none of the animal's fur is in the way.
2. To extend the nail, push your thumb slightly up and backward on the pad while pushing your forefinger forward.
3. Only clip the tip of the nail, straight across. Be sure to include the dewclaws on the inner side of the paw.
4. To avoid hitting the quick where the blood vessels are located, do not clip past the curve of the nail.

With gentle practice, you will be a pro and your pet will be comfortable with the procedure; however, if the process still causes distress, Advanced Care Veterinary Hospital is here to support your pet's needs.