



BERKELEY ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Nail Trimming

Trimming your dog's or cat's nails is essential to their overall health. Walking your dog on pavement and providing many scratching posts for your cat can help to keep the nails filed, however, this alone may not be enough. Regular nail trimmings are usually necessary to prevent overgrown nails and discomfort, and allow for acclimation to the process. If you are unable to trim your pet's nails yourself, you can schedule a technician's appointment at our hospital or with a groomer. Oftentimes these visits can be avoided by acclimating your pet to the nail trimming process at home.

Puppies and kittens

A young age is a great opportunity to acclimate your new family member to nail trimmings. Make sure to touch their feet often when not trimming, and trim nails weekly at a minimum, while introducing positive reinforcement, such as praise or treats. Not allowing your puppy or kitten to get irritated by the process, by trimming a nail or two per day, allows for better acclimation and decreases the chance of negative association.

Adults

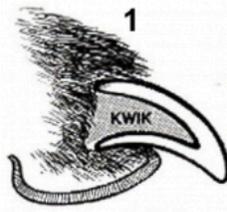
Acclimating an adult dog or cat to nail trimming may take more effort. If your pet is resistant, start by touching the feet and rewarding cooperation with higher-value treats. Progress to squeezing the toes with a reward. Next, introduce just the clipper or dremel close to the nails with a reward. Turn on the dremel or squeeze the trimmers next to a paw with a reward to acclimate the pet to the sound. Try this on all 4 paws. Next, trim one nail at a time, with a reward in between each nail, not allowing the pet to get stressed or irritated by the experience at any point. This gradual process may take days or weeks, depending on the pet's tolerance.

Treats

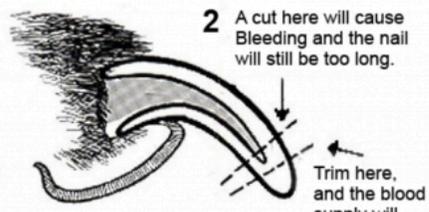
Make sure to reach for high-value treats that the pet doesn't get daily. Soft treats that can be broken apart into tiny pieces are best to prevent stomach upset. Make sure your pet can tolerate this treat or food before using it in your routine. Filling a Kong or a silicone lick mat with a treat such as wet dog food, moistened dry dog food, peanut butter, or cheese whiz serves as a great distraction. Moderation is key here - too much can cause an upset stomach, and you always want to make sure your pet tolerates this food before using it. Freezing these soft food substances allows for a slower consumption.

Accidents Happen

It can be hard to spot where the blood supply or Kwik ends in a dog's and a cat's nail. If you cut too short, this may cause a brief sting for your little one and some bleeding. Kwik-stop styptic powder is a go-to product to stop bleeding. Alternatively, you can use flour or corn starch. Apply any one of these to the bleeding nail with a tissue paper or gauze and hold with pressure for several minutes. If you are unable to stop the bleeding after applying pressure for 5 minutes, contact your veterinarian (or emergency hospital, if after-hours). Most of the time, if you cut too short, it isn't an issue. However, your pet may remember and be more hesitant to allow you to trim nails in the future. For this reason, moderation is key to what you trim off, and more frequent trimmings will allow the kwik to recede, leaving more room to trim in the future.

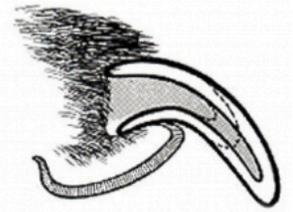


The Blood Supply (Kwik) in a short nail.

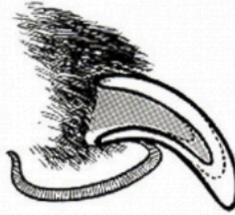


Note how the Blood Supply gets longer as the nail grows.

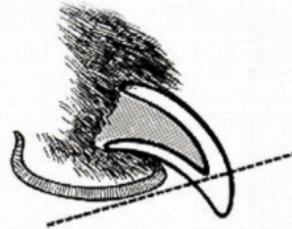
Trim here, and the blood supply will get shorter.



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.