

## Dog Toenail Trimming

### Tips to make clipping your dog's nails easier.

*By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG*

Q. My dog won't allow me to trim his toenails. What do you suggest I do to lessen his resistance?

A. Many dogs take our attempts to cut their nails as a personal insult. I think it has to do with their resistance to being dominated, and it can present quite a challenge when it comes to nail trimming, a necessary part of pet care. Left to grow too long, those nails can cause the feet to splay and impede a dog's ability to walk and run. They can also curl and grow back into the footpad, causing a painful infection. I realize it's probably hindsight in your case, but the best way to avoid this problem is to begin the procedure in early puppyhood, desensitizing the young pet to having his paws handled and nails trimmed before it becomes a power struggle.

Your best bet now would be to make your pet's pedicure a two-person operation. With the dog on a table, have a partner stand in front of his head, holding (not choking) it and talking to the dog reassuringly as you position yourself with your back to the dog's hind end. Supporting it with your body, cup the rear paw as you lift it only high enough to allow you to see the nails. Next, trim the nail tips only, praising the pet as you touch his feet.

For the front nails, have your helper move to the side of the table and support the dog under his belly and chest as you lift the front paw gently towards you. Again, only tip the nails, continuing to praise the dog as you go. Always have styptic powder on hand in case you nick the quick, the vein inside each nail, visible as a pink area on white nails while with black nails it's a guessing game. If you cut the nail too close, a dab of this powder will stop the bleeding but your already touchy dog may be even more resistant in the future.

Other alternatives are calling in a trainer to help with this problem or taking the pet to a grooming salon where tables are equipped with safety nooses experienced personnel are able to assist. Nail trimming at a grooming salon is fairly inexpensive and well worth it to avoid the struggle at home.

Kathy Salzberg, NCMG, is a Certified Master Groomer and writer who has been grooming pets since 1976. With her daughter Missi, she owns The Village Groomer in Walpole, Mass. She has also written extensively on pet care for several consumer magazines and authored three books on dogs and careers with pets. Kathy lives with her pets on Cape Cod.

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