

Bathing and Grooming a Pit Bull Puppy

The sooner you get a Pit Bull puppy used to grooming and nail trimming the better.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. How often should I shower my Pit Bull puppy? I also want to know how to trim his nails. Is it necessary? If so, how do I do it correctly?

A. Pit Bulls like to be clean and luckily they are wash-and-wear dogs. You can shower your Pit Bull as often as you like as long as you are using a mild pet shampoo and rinsing him thoroughly. I hope I'm not getting too personal here but I trust you are either showering with him or using an attachment in the tub or sink, not hosing him down outdoors as the water would probably be unpleasantly cold for your pet.

The sooner you get your Pit Bull puppy used to nail trimming the better. Actually, it should have been introduced as soon as you brought him home. It is necessary because overgrown nails can deform the foot, dig into the footpads, and sometimes break off, causing pain and infection. Start desensitizing him by handling his paws every single day.

To make this chore easier, I would invest in a grooming table and also enlist the help of a partner who can stand at his front end and gently hold his head as you lean your back against his rear end and gently lift each paw toward you as if you are shoeing a horse. Just clip the tip of each nail; don't take a chance of cutting the quick, the vein inside, causing pain and bleeding. Use pliers-type nail clippers and have some styptic powder on hand just in case you should ever nick a nail. It's not a catastrophe but it will be easier on you and your pet if you avoid it.

I prefer to work fast, being calm and matter-of-fact as if this procedure is not a big deal. When you move up to the front nails, again cup the paw in your palm and trim only the tips as your helper talks reassuringly to your pet. Some Pit Bull owners prefer to grind the nail tips down with a dremel tool. Either way, nail trimming should be done weekly to make sure your brawny buddy does not take offense and declare his nails off limits. These dogs sometimes take nail trimming as an act of dominance on our part so it's wise to get them used to it, early and often. You don't want to be faced with the unpleasant and costly scenario of having to put dog put under anesthesia at the vet's every time he needs a pedicure.