

Pedicure to Trim Dog Nails

Rotating tools that grind down a dog's nails can be a handy option for dog owners.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. What do you think of the Pedicure for dog nails? Do you think it would be worth a try?

A. While I still use my pliers-type nail trimmers – mainly because I am so used to them after years of nail trimming – rotating tools like the one your dad probably had in his basement have long been used to grind down dogs' nails. In my opinion, the Pedicure and others like it are a big improvement to these industrial tools because they are safer for the pet and easier to use for those trimming the nails.

Using regular nail trimmers, even an experienced groomer will sometimes nick the "quick," the blood vessel within each nail, causing discomfort and bleeding. On black nails, the vein inside is invisible, so trimming them is always an educated guessing game, and sometimes dogs will squirm during the process, causing the clipper to move just enough to cut the quick in the process. That's why we always keep a jar of styptic powder handy; one dab of this blood-clotting substance usually stops the bleeding instantly. By the way, elephants are not the only animals with long memories; one you nick a dog's quick, don't be surprised if he balks or runs and hides at the very sight of nail trimmers.

The tool you mention employs a rotating drum with a sandpaper-like surface that shaves and smoothes the nail, one very thin layer at a time, vastly diminishing the chance of cutting the quick. In this way, it files the nail naturally as dogs do when they walk on pavement, not leaving a sharply cut edge as traditional clippers do. The Pedicure can be plugged in or powered by a rechargeable battery. Because it has a safety feature allowing the user to open it to fit individual nail size, it's easy to control because the paw is stabilized. Some groomers now use this tool instead of the pliers or guillotine-type trimmers we used in the past. It's also fairly quiet so it doesn't scare the pet like the industrial-variety dremel tool sometimes does, and pets seem to get used to it fairly quickly.

Keeping your dog's nails trimmed is important because in addition to scratching you, your furniture, and your floors, overgrown nails can cause difficulty in walking and lead to splayed toes, permanently deformed feet, and calluses. Painful injuries can result if untrimmed nails break off below the quick, sometimes leading to foot infections.