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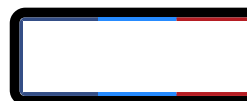


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A Stress-Free Way For Trimming Your Dog's Toenails

DIY / By Dr Karen Gellman



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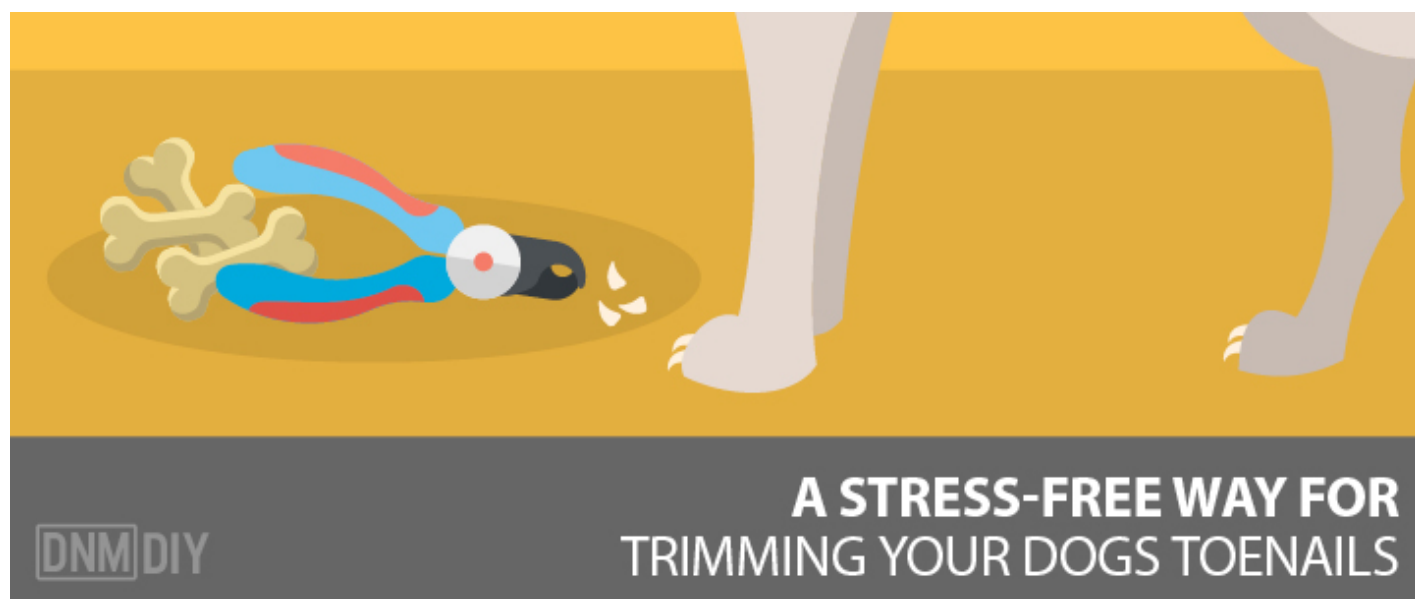
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The most common reasons for avoiding nail trims are that the owner is afraid of “quicking” the dog, or that the dog fusses and creates bad feelings around the procedure.

Nail cutting becomes an event surrounded by angst and drama. For very active dogs who run all day long on varied surfaces, cutting nails may not be necessary.

High mileage wears them down naturally.

But among city or suburban dogs who are lucky to get a mile or two walk daily, excessively long toenails are more common than not.

Consequences Of Long Toenails

So what's the big deal?

The first consequence of long toenails is painful feet.

When a dog's toenails contact hard ground, like a sidewalk or your kitchen floor, the hard surface pushes the nail back up into the nail bed.



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When the slightest touch is painful to your dog, he will fuss when you pick up his paw to cut nails.

The second consequence of long toenails is more serious.

All animals rely on information from nerves in their feet to move through the world and process gravity accurately.

For millions of years, wild dogs have run long distances while hunting and worn their nails short.

The only time their toenails would touch the ground was when climbing a hill.

So a dog's brain is evolutionarily programmed to associate toenail contact with being on a hill, and he shifts his body posture accordingly: leaning forward over his forelimbs, up the imaginary hill as reported by his toes.

Since the hill is not real, a secondary compensation with his hind limbs is necessary to avoid a face plant.

This abnormal compensatory posture can be called "goat on a rock," because it brings his paws closer together under his body.

Normal neutral posture is a nice show dog "stack," with vertical legs like a table.

Recent research shows that standing with limbs "camped-in" is hard work to maintain.

These goat-on-a-rock dogs get over-used muscles and eventually over-used joints, especially in their hind limbs, making it difficult to jump in cars, climb stairs and even hard to get up from lying down.



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Cutting toenails short can be like a miracle cure for your dog whose hind end has become painful, weak and over-used.

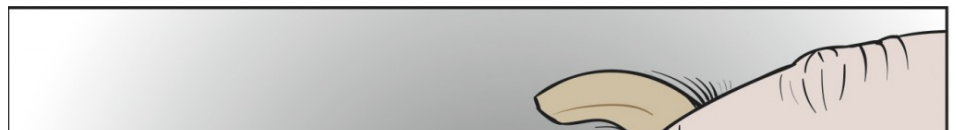
That's the "why." Now for the "what and how."

(NOTE: Are you feeding for strong teeth, bones — and toenails? **Grab our free 3-part pet food nutrition video workshop** and learn how to pick a food that feeds your dog instead of just filling him.)

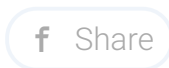


Tools Of The Trade

NAIL CLIPPERS

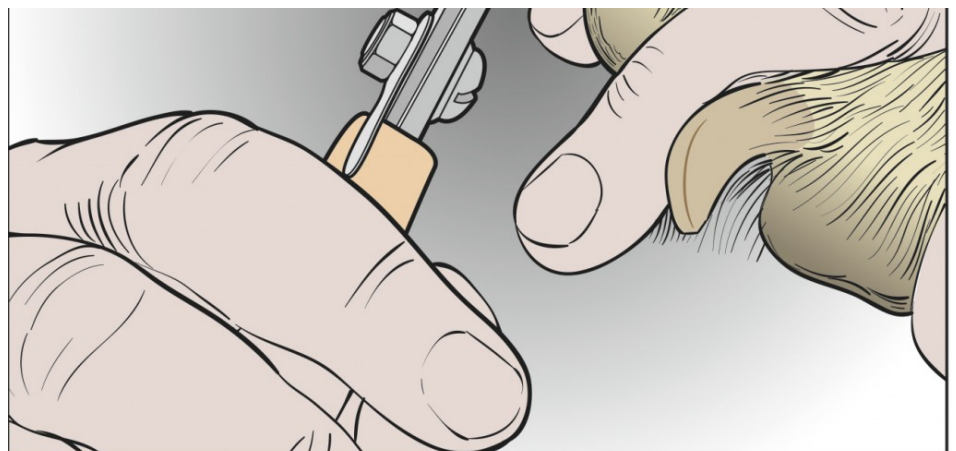


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clippers crush the toe, which is painful. Never put the whole nail in a clipper.

- Use small size clippers for better control. Only giant breed dogs will need large ones.



- Keep your tools sharp: either replace or sharpen your clippers regularly.
- “Pedi-paws” type grinder: Smooth out your trim afterwards with a rotating emeryboard.

- **File only the insensitive nail around the top and sides of the quick: “Sharpen the pencil” where the nail is the wood and the quick is the lead.**

IF YOU CUT THE QUICK

- ***Use corn starch to staunch the bleeding if you make a nail leak. With shallow cuts, this will be rare.***
- ***It’s easiest if you use a small container with tightly packed powder.***



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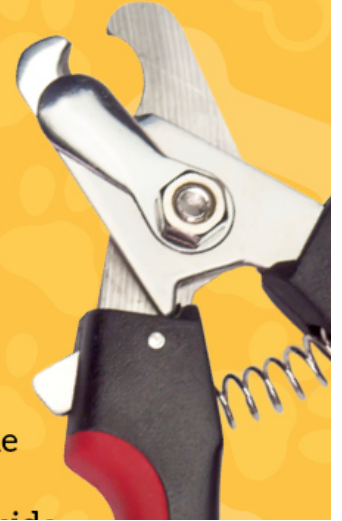
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HOW TO TRIM YOUR DOG'S NAILS



STEP 1

Handle your dog's paws often and introduce the clippers frequently (without cutting). Use lots of praise and delicious treats. Get a quality pair of clippers. We recommend the pincer style that come with a guide to help you avoid cutting the quick.



STEP 2

Hold your dog's paw firmly but gently. Cut the nail below the quick at a 45° angle, taking off



STEP 3

Trim only until you see the white inside the nail with a small dot of black in the center. If you don't see the white, you can cut a bit closer. Be careful, just take a small amount off or you will cut the quick. Check and/or cut your dog's nails every three weeks, depending on how active he is.



FYI ... Keep some corn starch close at hand and if you do accidentally clip too short, pack a pinch into the end of the nail to stop the bleeding.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Trim nails outside or in a well lit room.

If you need “cheaters” for reading, use them for toenail clipping too.

It’s actually easier to see the nail structures on pigmented nails than on white ones.

The insensitive nail will show as a chalky ring around the sensitive quick.

Keep clipper blades almost parallel to the nail – never cut across the finger.

Don’t squeeze the toes – that hurts!

Use your fingers to separate the toes for clipping and hold the paw gently.

Use a pair of blunt edged children’s scissors to remove excess toe hair: nothing dulls clippers quicker than cutting hair!

Remember, no dog ever died from a quicked toenail. If you “quick” your dog accidentally, give a yummy treat right away.

Make nail trimming fun: always associate nail cutting with cookies and praise.



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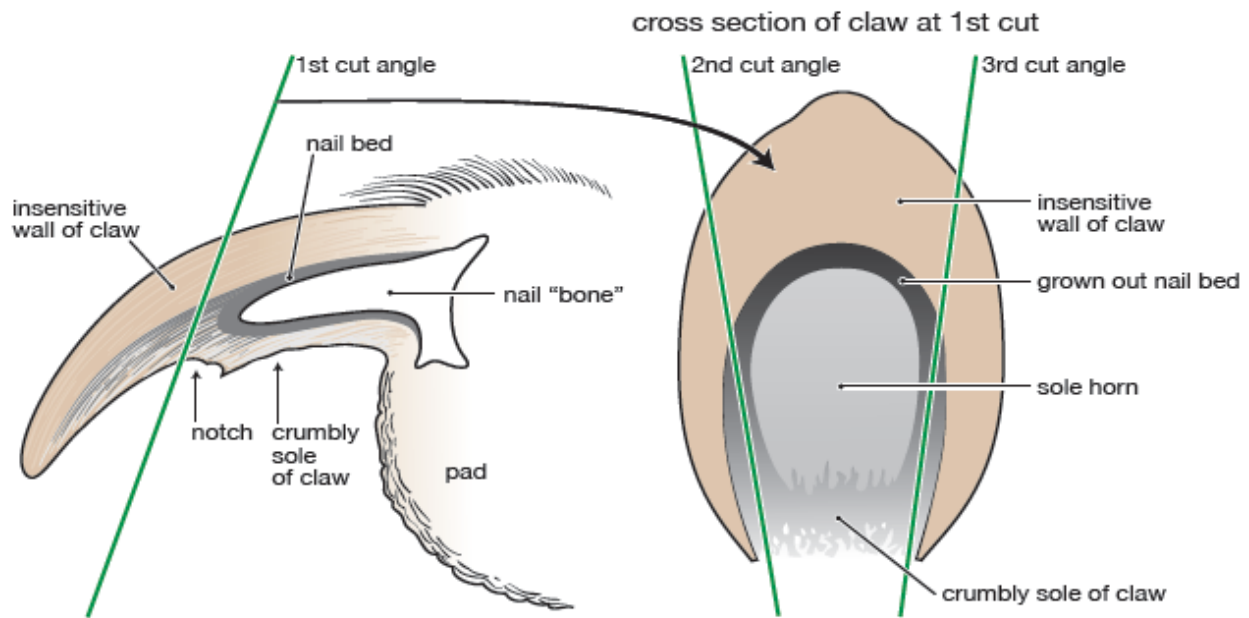
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Once the insensitive nail is thinned out and isn’t supporting the quick, the quick will dry up and recede. This will allow you to cut your dog’s nails even shorter. Each dog’s nails are different, but very long toenails often become dry and cracked, with a clear separation of the living tissue and the insensitive nail. This will make it easier to trim back longer nails.

What’s inside your dog’s toenail?



On the left, the interior structures are shown, along with the suggested angle to remove the “roof” of the nail, while not harming the sensitive quick.



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On the right is a close-up view of the inside of the nail. On cross section, the sensitive quick will look translucent and glossy, like living flesh.

In untrimmed claws, there will often be a “notch” below the tip of the quick. It is usually safe to initiate your angled cut at the notch.

Some dogs act like cutting their nails is their worst nightmare.

This may be a learned behavior from their painful, overstimulated toes, which will slowly dissipate along with the pain once the nails are short.

Use all your best restraint and behavior modification tricks to get through the initial phase, whether your dog is a squirmer or a drama queen.

Start on the hind feet, because the nails tend to be a little shorter and less sensitive than the front.

But remember you can't make an accurate cut on a moving target so get help from your dog trainer or groomer if needed.

Make nail trimming "quality time" you spend with your dog. Lots of kisses, lots of treats and a positive attitude go a long way.

If you dread it, your dog will too, so learn how to be a good actor until you succeed in believing it can be a loving experience for you both.

If your dog loses patience quickly, try cutting one nail a day.



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Short toenails are critical to your dog's health and soundness. Failure is not an option!

(Illustrations by Michael A Simmons MFA)

NOTE: Head and shoulders, knees and toes... and toenails always need TLC. The best way to maintain healthy growth in your dog is through a healthy diet. We've put together a **free video series workshop** all about nutrition. You're not going to want to miss this one. In these videos we give you the exact calculations you can use to analyze pet food like an industry expert. Keep these calculations and show your friends, this trick works on any bag or can of pet food you can find!

Enter your email below to get access to the free video series workshop!

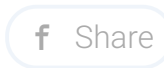
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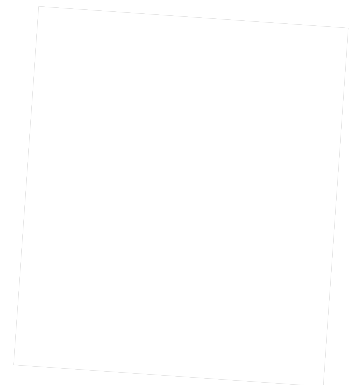
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About the Author **Dr Karen Gellman**

Karen Gellman DVM PhD is known by colleagues worldwide for teaching and researching on posture, biomechanics and holistic veterinary medicine. She practices at The Wellness Center for Pets in Ithaca, NY.



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