

# Nail Trimming - 7 Tips

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

## Seven Tips for Nail Trimming

How many of us put off trimming our pet's nails until the inevitable veterinary check-up comes around and the veterinarian must do it? It is important to remember that untrimmed nails can cause a variety of problems from scratched up floors for you to deformed feet and back problems for your pet. In some cases, they will actually grow back into the dog's feet.

A good indication that nails are too long is a telltale "click-click-click" when walking on uncarpeted areas.

1. Trim nails so that when the animal steps down, nails do not touch the floor.
2. Invest in a good pair of [nail trimmers](#) in an appropriate size for your pet. They can last a lifetime.
3. Make trimming time fun and not a struggle. Sit on the floor with your pet, trimmers, and [Doctors Foster and Smith CutStop® Styptic Pads](#) to stop bleeding if you nick the quick. The "quick," a blood vessel that runs down the middle of your pet's nail, grows as the nail grows, so if you wait a long time between cuttings, the quick will be closer to the end of the nail. This means more likelihood of bleeding during trimming.
4. Try to trim your pet's nails weekly, even if long walks keep them naturally short. Weekly nail trimmings can also alert you to other foot problems your pet may have.
5. Trimming your pet's nails doesn't have to be a chore or unpleasant. If your pet is not used to having his nails trimmed, start slowly and gradually work up to simply holding his toes firmly for 15-30 seconds. Do not let him mouth or bite at you. It can take daily handling for a week or more to get some pets used to this.
6. Take one toe at a time in your hands and trim very thin slices off the end of the nail until you see a black dot appear. This is the start of the quick that you want to avoid. The good news is that, the more diligent you are about trimming, the more the quick will regress into the nail, allowing you to cut shorter each time.
7. If your pet will tolerate it, do all four feet this way. If he won't, take a break. And don't forget the dewclaws. On most breeds, if they haven't been removed, dewclaws are 1-4" above the feet on the inner side of the legs. If not trimmed, dewclaws can grow so long they curl up and grow into the soft tissue, like a painful ingrown toenail.



Trimming nails regularly should be a part of your weekly grooming routine with your pet. Remember that cats as well as dogs can benefit from a nail trimming.