

# ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

## **Nail Problems in Dogs and Cats**

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Keeping your pet's nails trimmed will not only help keep you from getting scratched by the sharp points but it may also prevent your pet from getting a nail snagged on something and torn off. Your pet's nails will need trimming when the points on the ends become excessively sharp, or the nails hit the ground when your pet is standing. But be careful not to cut the quick, where a small bone protrudes into the nail along with blood vessels and nerves. Cutting the quick or even pinching it can be painful to your pet.

If your dog is young and active, he may not need his nails trimmed unless he has dewclaws. Dewclaws are special toes that are further up the inside of each leg and are often hidden by hair. These toes do not touch the ground, so the nails are not worn off and if not trimmed can actually grow around and into the foot! These toes can be removed surgically if they lead to problems.

Older dogs and small breeds of dogs may have to have their nails trimmed every month. Cats can have their nails trimmed every week if you are trying to keep them from scratching furniture.

To trim your pet's nails we recommend using heavy duty pet nail trimmers, not scissors or human nail trimmers as these often pinch before cutting.

First, get your pet used to you handling his feet. Once you have your pet trained to hold still when you pick up each foot and examine the nail, begin trimming just the very tip off. After you have been doing the nails for a while and you and your pet gain confidence, then you can try to get closer to the quick. Always keep something around to stop the bleeding if you happen to quick a nail. A veterinarian should check nails that are broken at the base or are cut extremely short, as they can easily become infected.

If your pet has black nails that are thick, try turning them over to see if they are hollow underneath. Only the hollow part should be cut. With white toenails, shine a strong pen light through the nail and look for the red quick. Do not trim any closer than 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch to the quick.

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If you are trimming your pet's nails shorter because he is scratching you, that will not be enough. Training your pet not to jump on you is the cure. That is a behavior problem, not a nail problem. The first step is to turn away and ignore your pet when he jumps up on you. Then teach him to sit to be greeted.

If you have any questions or would like a lesson in nail trimming, please call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643. 🐾