

# Nail clipping



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Some dogs never need to have their nails cut as the nail length is often controlled naturally by walking on firm surfaces.

But nails can grow quickly in pets that are not exercising on hard ground or in elderly pets and pets that are predominantly inside. Some pets need to have their nails clipped every one to two months.

It is a good idea to examine your pet's feet regularly, not only for nail length but also for lumps of mud, foreign objects and matted fur stuck between the pads. These are problems seen especially in dogs with hairy feet.

### Helpful hints

Dogs' nails should be cut so that when your dog is standing they are just in contact with the ground. Nail clippers especially made for animals should be used – these are available at our clinic. Dogs' claws contain an area of tissue with nerve and blood vessels, known as the 'quick'. The length of the quick varies between individuals and can be seen as the pink area in white nails. This should be avoided because it is painful when cut, causing bleeding, which may be difficult to stop. The quick is not visible in black nails and so judgment of nail length in these nails can be difficult.

Dewclaws also need to be checked. They are found on the inside of the lower leg just above the foot, and are equivalent to human thumbs. As these claws do not touch the ground they do not wear naturally and if neglected may grow excessively and even curl back and penetrate the pad.

Should any of the nails bleed, apply pressure with a cotton ball. The blood usually will clot in a few minutes. If bleeding persists, a styptic pencil can be used, or a softened cake of soap pressured onto the cut end will usually seal it.

Cats' nails can be long and sharp. It is also common practice to clip their nails if required – this will not impede their ability to climb. The same principles for dogs' nails apply for clipping cats' nails. Special small cat clippers are available at the clinic.