



Pet Health – Nail trimming

If you've ever tried to clip your pet's nails, you'll know it can be a tricky – and sometimes downright hazardous – exercise. This week I'm sharing some tips for taking the trauma out of trimming.

Trimming dogs' claws

It's important to note that not all pets need to have their nails trimmed. If your dog spends plenty of time outside, the hard ground can act as an emery board and keep their nails short and flat. It is really only the dewclaws, which don't contact the ground, that may require trimming, and some dogs will learn to chew their own dewclaws to keep them short.

Trimming cats' claws

I am generally not a fan of trimming cats' claws unless the cat is very old and the claws are causing a problem because cats need their claws for climbing and escaping danger. Interestingly in my 25-plus years experience as a vet, cats that have their claws trimmed tend to try and sharpen them again and may resort to clawing your furniture! For most cats, I recommend a scratching post to let nature take care of their claws.

Taking the trauma out of trimming

If your pet does need their nails trimmed, it can be quite traumatic for both pet and owner.

Dogs and cats can become unsettled when having their feet or other body parts held or touched, particularly if they are not used to it or have suffered a bad experience in the past.

A simple and important practice to help your pet to be more comfortable with nail trimming and other trips to the vet is to get them accustomed to being handled as soon as possible, ideally from a young age.

To avoid phobia of the vet and the nail clippers, I recommend de-sensitising your pet by handling them often and practising minor nail trims followed by a food reward. Practice and food rewards encourage relaxed and positive behaviour in your pet if they are having an issue.

Over time you will find your pet is more relaxed when they need to have their nails trimmed or have any other treatment at the vet. The experience will be much easier for them and for you.

