

Dr. Oakley says....

Spring is here! I know, it's still cold out there but the birds are flocking to the feeders, the Zickmanns keep checking their maple sugaring taps and the days are longer. All indications point to warm weather coming!!

This month I wanted to talk about one of my pet peeves, (excuse the pun!) nail trimming! How do you trim nails correctly? I have seen so many of my canine cousins and cat friends come in with broken nails and wounded toes needlessly due to trimming issues.

Some of us have black nails, which are harder to cut because you can't see the "quick" (the live tissue that begins skin attachment). Here are a few tips to successfully have your canine or feline pal trimmed up in no time!

First, you need to use high quality trimmers (please, no shortcuts here) and some styptic powder, such as Kwik-Stop or even cornstarch from your kitchen pantry will do. This will stop the bleeding, if you do nick the quick.

Second, try sitting on the floor with your pet or putting them on a table with someone holding them. Hold the paw firmly and push the pads to extend the nail. See if you can locate where the quick ends. If the nails are light, it's easy to see the pink color that marks the quick's end. If the nails are black, you can look for a black dot underneath the nail to mark the end of the quick. Once you know where to cut, start trimming the nail parallel with the bottom of the paw. Sometimes, several small clips work better than one large one. If the nails are brittle and splinter when you trim them, just file the nail from back to tip.

Third, your pet will appreciate your taking your time with this and a treat at the end is always good encouragement! Don't forget the dew claws, (thumbs or big toes) as they can grow and circle around and cut back into the foot if forgotten. Dr. Z checks my dewes regularly as I am prone to those getting out of control. I don't particularly enjoy it but Dr. Z always plays with me afterwards, which I love, and usually has a little snack for me, so I let it happen.

If you do accidentally cut the quick, don't panic! Wipe the blood and apply the styptic powder or cornstarch to stop the bleeding. These heal rather quickly but you may need to encourage your pet to stay off of it for a few minutes to allow it to clot.

How often to trim, you ask? Well, probably more often than you think. If you hear us click, click, on hard surface floors then it is time for a trim. When you hear the clicking, we are having trouble on the floor because they get in the way of our natural foot placement and gait. For most dogs, a monthly trim will do but indoor cats require every 1-2 weeks to keep their feet in shape.

Most importantly....don't forget to treat!

Peace,

Dr. Oakley