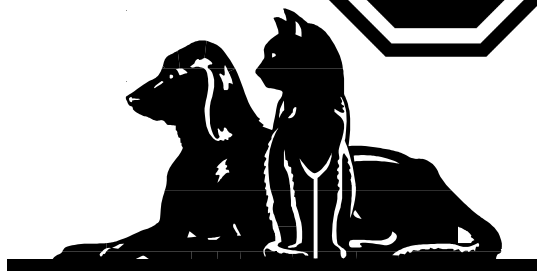


Basic information on Nail Trimming



Nail trimming is an essential part of the grooming and care of your dog, cat, bird, iguana, even your rabbit or guinea pig. The extent to which an animal's nails grow during a given time period depends on such factors as the predominant surface it runs/walks on and the shape and condition of the feet. Characteristics of the breed of animal are also significant.

A cat or dog that spends most of its life on wall-to-wall carpeting has little opportunity to wear down its nails. This would apply to a bird with only one smooth wooden perch in his cage. An animal with deformed, splayed feet and/or toes may have nails which do not touch the ground and will not wear down naturally.

The nail itself is comprised of tender inner tissue, or "kwik", encased in a horny, protective sheath which, under ideal circumstances, wears down while the animal is running on hard surfaces, digging, scratching, or performing other activities.

House pets, unable to indulge in such activities, must have their nails cut, filed, or ground to compensate for the lack of normal wear-and-tear. This prevents painful or debilitating foot disorders from developing.

When nails are regularly cared for, the "kwik" tends to shrink and recede and chances of accidentally cutting it during routine nail trimming diminishes. However, as most pets' feet rarely get enough attention, nails sometimes attain excessive length and cutting them back sufficiently to relieve pet discomfort may induce a variable amount of hemorrhaging – it's unavoidable. Styptic powder "kwik-ly" stops the bleeding.

As a rule, the "kwik" does not extend into the open area on the underside of the nail and it is safe to cut the nail at that point without worrying. If the nails are light-colored, the "kwik" can be readily seen as a darker shadow within the nail. If the nail is dark, the "kwik" becomes invisible and the groomer must rely on experience and good judgement. A simple rule of thumb is to cut the nail short enough to relieve pressure on the toes when the animal is standing.

There are various methods of applying styptic powder. The following method is easy, effective, and economical.

1. Cut the cotton tip off the end of a hollow, plastic stemmed cotton swab with nail clippers.
2. Moisten the end of the hollow plastic stem.
3. Load the wet end by jabbing it into styptic powder.

The best approach to an emergency is adequate advance preparation. The following instructions will help reduce the needless anxiety associated with bleeding nails.

1. Prepare a swab as described above.
2. If the nail begins to bleed, apply styptic powder with the readied applicator.
3. If bleeding does not immediately stop, dip the applicator back into the coagulant powder and repeat the process. Push the loaded stem firmly into the hollow nail.
4. Wipe away any excess styptic powder with the other end of the cotton swab.

For virtually bloodless nail trimming, cut each nail individually and check for bleeding. If you cut the nails in rapid succession, you may start the blood flowing too freely consequently making it more difficult to control.

Whatever happens, keep cool and don't panic. Panic doesn't solve problems, it creates them.

In the case of cats and dogs, a bleeding nail is a mess but little more. A bird's nail, however, bleeds more freely and, since they have less blood to spare, immediate attention is required.

Do not allow your pet to run on rough surfaces immediately following nail trimming, or bleeding may reoccur.

Please Note: This handout is meant to provide basic information only.

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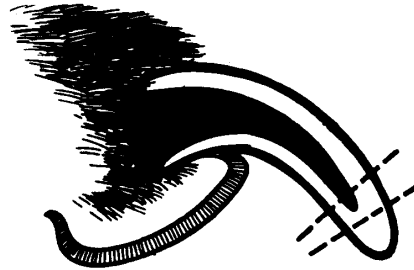
The nail and blood supply

Diagram 1



The blood supply (Kwik) in a short nail.

Diagram 2



Note how the blood supply gets longer as the nail grows.

A cut here will cause bleeding and the nail will still be too long.

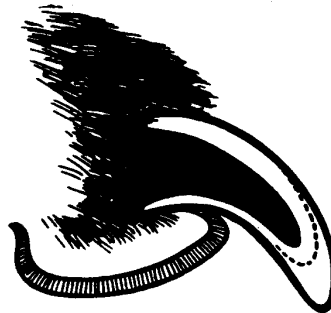
TRIM HERE and the blood supply will begin to get shorter.

Diagram 3



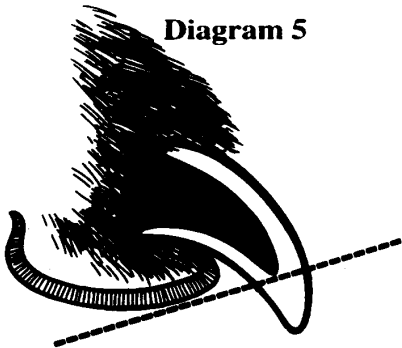
If you clip or file a little off of a long nail every few days, the blood supply will continue to recede.

Diagram 4



As the nail gets shorter so does the blood supply.

Diagram 5



Only when the nail is kept short can it be trimmed without bleeding. If the same cut had been made on the long nail in Diagram 2, it would have caused bleeding.

Diagram 6



A properly trimmed nail.