

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

In most aspects of being a good pet owner, I do very well. However, when it comes to grooming, I don't do very well, especially when it comes to Lola and Chip's nails. Lola hates to have her nails done. She becomes somewhat hysterical when we try to do this. I have taken her to professional groomers to get them done and it has gone fairly well. I hate seeing her go through her fearful phases. So Mike, my husband, and I are doing one or two nails a day. The clipped nails will probably grow out by the time the last nail is done. When Lola came into our lives she had extremely long nails. She never liked to have them clipped. She loves to be held, sleeps next to us, on our laps and rolls over for tummy rubs – but don't clip her nails. We have never tried a grinder. My friend Rhonda used one and was very successful. Maybe we will explore this method. So as I was approaching this week's article, Mike suggested researching nail trimming for dogs.

The following information is taken from "Dogs – The Ultimate Care Guide" put out by Prevention For Pets and AdoptaPet.com sponsored by Purina and Chew.com.

Knowing how to cut or grind down your dog's nails is an important skill for any dog owner... or knowing you can afford to take your dog to a groomer or vet to have them trimmed every four to six weeks! I'm sure I inherited part of my fear of clipping a dog's nails from my mom. She loved big black dogs, and we had a pair of adopted big black mutts for most of my growing up. Though they had some white toes, all their toe nails were pitch black. In case you're not familiar with the mechanics of trimming a dog's nail, it is very important that you only trim off the tip. This is because, just like a human finger nail, if you trim too much off, you cut the "quick" which in a dog, just like a human, hurts tremendously, and can bleed copiously! When a dog's nails are white, you can usually see the pink quick inside, and know how much or little you can safely trim. Black nails though, you have to make an educated guess, and with a wiggly dog, even your best guess can get thrown off, and ouch! If your dog has white nails, it is easy to locate the quick. Simply look for the pink line that extends from the base of the nail down toward the tip. When you trim, clip below the pink line so you don't cut into the quick. If you are trimming your own dog's nails you should have some Styptic powder to cover the nail. It will quickly stop the bleeding. Styptic powder may be purchased at a drug store over the counter.

Almost all dogs' nails need to be trimmed on a regular basis, usually about once a month. It does depend on how fast your dog's nails grow, and how much walking and running they are doing on rough surfaces like asphalt, and if they have their "dew" claws – those nails higher up on their legs which don't receive any wear. Nails that aren't trimmed regularly will keep growing, even to the point of growing around in a circle and into the pads of their feet. Not good! Even nails that are only trimmed occasionally, if too long can cause a dog's feet and joints to take unnatural stress when they walk, causing pain both short and long-term.

Many dogs don't like their feet to be touched at all, often because someone at one point painfully trimmed their nails and got their quick. If you have adopted a new dog or puppy who doesn't like his feet being picked up, you can...

Get your dog comfortable with paws being handled first!

1. Pick a time when your dog is most relaxed, like at the end of a day, after lots of exercise, when they are lying down for a nap. Gently touch your dog's front paw and reward with treat and verbal praise. Repeat daily until you can touch all paws.
2. Pick up your dog's front paw and let go right away, reward with treat/praise. Repeat with all four paws. Practice once daily for a week.
3. Pick up and hold your dog's front paw for a few seconds, and reward with treat/praise. If your dog pulls his paw out of your hand, allow him to do so, but he doesn't get the reward. Repeat with all four paws. Practice once daily until your dog lets you hold each paw for about 20 seconds without pulling it out of your hand, then add in gently squeezing each toe so the nail extends out.
4. Some dogs are afraid of the "click" noise the nail cutters make (or the whirl of the nail grinder, if you use that instead). Ask your dog to sit and focus on a treat in your hand. With your other hand, make the click with the clippers (or turn the grinder on then off) and reward with a treat. This is like clicker-training your dog but you are clipper-training them instead! Repeat a few times, then practice daily until your dog is relaxed with the click/whirl noise.

Now you are ready to trim your dog's nails!

If this is your first time ever trimming a dog's nails, I suggest having a professional groomer, or an experienced vet or vet tech, show you how the first time. If you have a nervous, big, or energetic dog, having someone help you can make the task easier if they can hold the dog still, or even just feed them treats as you trim their nails. I personally prefer to use a nail grinder. They sell pet nail grinders, but pro groomers most often use a two-speed dremel, which is a handheld rotary tool, on the low setting (6,000 RPM) with a sandpaper bit.

How to trim your dog's nails...

1. Choose a time when your dog is most relaxed, like at the end of the day or midday nap time. Pick up your dog's paw and gently squeeze one toe, so the nail is extended. See before photo below.
2. Using a nail clip or a grinder, cut off or grind down the very tip of the nail. If your dog has very long nails, you still only want to take off the very tip. (You can trim them every other week so the quick will recede to make the nails shorter over time.) If you are grinding, allow the grinder to do the work, don't press the nail hard into the grinder, and use 1 to 2 second pulses against the nail, to avoid overheating. You want to angle the cut so that when the dog's is standing, the cut is slightly tilted up, almost parallel to the ground. See photo below.

Dates to Save:

September 4 – Dining with Dogs and Cats at Lynne's Custom Meats on Highway 63 – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

September 29 – October 6th - Art For Animals Plus – On-Line – www.kubarekauction.com

November 1 – Last day of Shoe Drive

